A SAC PRAIRIE JOURNAL

Village Year

BY AUGUST DERLETH

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VILLAGE YEAR

A Sac Prairie Journal

BY AUGUST DERLETH

SAC PRAIRIE SAGA

Novels

STILL IS THE SUMMER NIGHT
WIND OVER WISCONSIN
RESTLESS IS THE RIVER
BRIGHT JOURNEY

Short Stories and Novellas

PLACE OF HAWKS
ANY DAY NOW
COUNTRY GROWTH

Miscellaneous Prose

ATMOSPHERE OF HOUSES
VILLAGE YEAR: A SAC PRAIRIE JOURNAL

Poems

HAWK ON THE WIND
MAN TRACK HERE
HERE ON A DARKLING PLAIN
WIND IN THE ELMS

STILL SMALL VOICE: THE BIOGRAPHY OF ZONA GALE

VILLAGE YEAR

A SAC PRAIRIE JOURNAL

BY AUGUST DERLETH

WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY FRANK UTPATEL

ENDPAPER MAP BY HJALMAR SKULDT

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

for Hugh
who has shared my appreciation of life
in Sac Prairie

WOOD ENGRAVINGS BY FRANK UTPATEL

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PROGRAM NOTE

ON a fertile, outthrust ledge of land it lies: Sac Prairie, Wisconsin—

The paw of land in a fine
unbroken curve from west
by north pushing out to west
by south . . .

on the edge of the great driftless area, and thus on some of the oldest land in North America: a small village, with two centers, upper and lower Sac Prairie, with a population of scarcely 2500. It seems incredible to eastern visitors that Sac Prairie can be 103 years old, and yet it is; there are older places in Wisconsin, some of them twice as old, and yet Sac Prairie is one of the oldest.

The village lies on the Wisconsin, on the site of the great village of the Sacs or Saukies visited by Carver in 1766, and the river is its eastern line; to westward and north the undulant prairie rolls in a succession of slow rises to the foothills and the bluffs; and in the south, the bottoms border the river to the Ferry Bluff range in the southwest; squarely across the Wisconsin is the line of the moraine ridge where the glacier stopped. It is not unlike most other villages in these United States, except that it is fortunate in that it lies in a setting of great natural beauty. Though there are in Sac Prairie people of English, Irish, Scotch, French, Hungarian, and Slovakian ancestry, the majority are German, chiefly from the Bavarian provinces. Indeed, Sac Prairie was founded largely by German refugees: aristocrats, Humanists

(whose fine Freethinker Society persists to this day), Roman Catholics of upper, middle, and lower classes, distinctions now washed away by time. Close upon their heels came good Yankee stock, who settled upon the upper prairie. Together, they took possession of the beautiful prairie of the Sacs, the land which gave birth to Black Hawk and for which later he fought.

Life in Sac Prairie cannot differ much from life in any other village, apart from superficial regional differences. I thought a long time ago of recording some of the things which never see the light of day in the local weeklies, and so the *Sac Prairie Journal* came into being. It was not designed to be the repository for those more commonly known social activities of any village—the bridge parties, the comings and goings: "Miss L—— spent the day in Madison," or "Mrs. C—— entertained her bridge club Monday evening. A delicious supper was enjoyed by all"; it was meant to be only a record of the lesser-known aspects of life in Sac Prairie. It was never meant for publication; it was not written for any public eye—but Tom Coward disagreed, and presents here a small part of that monumental journal.

August Derleth

Sauk City, Wisconsin
1 January, 1941

VILLAGE YEAR

A Sac Prairie Journal

14 DECEMBER: Walking through a gentle fall of snow tonight to grandfather Derleth's, and knowing grandmother to be dying, I could not help thinking of change, and all the aspects of change eternally taking place, some clearly obvious, and so many secret, but no less eventually plain to eye and heart: the eternal flux—and I thought: It is more than just birth and death, more than a tree gone, a house risen: the slow, inexorable changing of a way of life, the difference between youth and age, in final analysis always the gulf between generations. Snow came down with a faint whispering, and in the melancholy of my occupation with grandmother's slow dying, I thought of these flakes as voices all around me in the still, windless air, the voices of those people and things long gone, the remote pulse of life gone by.

I found grandmother Derleth on the couch, with aunt Virginia sitting near by and grandfather not far away, wordless. Grandmother had fallen together much and was unmistakably dying, even though this move from her bed to the familiar couch in the dining room gave evidence of

some increase in strength. The room was only dimly lighted, and a faint glowing came from the street light, so that there was a spectral presence in the room. I sat down beside grandmother to jolly her a little by reminding her how, as a little boy, I had come daily to snoop about her cupboards for her good *Kaffeekuchen,* and presently I persuaded her to talk of *Dampf-nudeln* and *Schupf-nudeln.* She talked readily enough, her mind now astonishingly clear, freed from the uncertainty so much a part of arteriosclerosis; she explained the making of them, making feeble motions which held yet something of the vigor which was hers of old. After I had written down what she had said of these old recipes, she began to talk of many things, her tired mind searching the channels of her early memories, and in her rambling talk came upon great-grandfather Peter van Damm and his whistling.

He could whistle like any bird, she said, but preferred the cardinal's voice. Often at night he would sit out on the stoop of his house, which stood where father's now stands, and where I lived for years after great-grandfather's death, and, sitting there, would whistle so loudly that it could be heard in the remotest lanes of Sac Prairie. He imitated birds, he whistled songs. "There was one song," said grandmother, growing excited. "He liked it the best." *O Strassbourg!* She too had sung this and hummed its melody; I remembered her doing so from my own childhood. Now she whistled it brokenly, keeping time with one upraised arm, indomitably going through to the end.

"One night when we were coming from Just's, Virginia and I—it was late—and we heard whistling coming from pa's place. I was afraid something was wrong that pa was up so

late. We were in the park then, going by the Park Hall, and I had to see what was the matter. We went over the tracks to the house, and there he was, sitting on the stoop, whistling to himself. Mother was dead, then, and he lived alone. 'What are you doing out so late, Jenny?' he asked me. I said I was thinking of him, I heard him whistle, I thought something was wrong. *Und hat er gelacht! 'Kalbmoses!'* he said. 'Be off home with you. I'm all right.' We could hear him whistling all the way home."

An hour fled, and I left the house when uncle Joe came with dad, feeling melancholy still, but marveling at how her mind had cleared in these last days.

15 DECEMBER: I spent a few hours of this afternoon again with grandmother, sitting to listen to more memories, which flowed from her now unceasingly, all with the same remarkable clarity. Great-grandfather Damm, she said, whistled with a leaf, any kind of leaf, and sometimes only a piece of one with which to imitate birds. "He used to like to whistle and sing *Nellie Bly*, and of course, *O Strassbourg!* But you don't know that song, August; it goes like this—

O Strassbourg, O Strassbourg, du wunderschöne Stadt,
Da liegt begraben mancher braver Soldat . . .

It used to be in all the old *Liederbücher,* but now they don't use them anymore, they don't sing the old songs." Presently she began to sing a sad song of death: *Der Wanderer,* whereupon aunt Virginia began to sniffle and weep and turned away, but in a little while grandmother resumed where she had left off the previous evening, talking about *Schupfnudeln.* "You have to rub them with the hands into small

pieces, like this." She demonstrated. Aunt Virginia suddenly took exception, adding a small detail while grandmother watched and, at her finishing, chided her, laughingly, saying, "*Du verlogenes Mädel!*" She mentioned also *Fassnacht's Kügel*—similar to doughnuts designed for the festivities of the torchlight parade on the eve of Ash Wednesday, a celebration held in Sac Prairie long ago, remembered surely from her girlhood, when the Lenten period held more meaning than it does today. She went back more than fifty years, to the 1850's and 1860's, and spoke of the custom in many houses in the village to set the table with a large bowl of potatoes or soup or the like out of which everyone at table helped himself directly, that is, ate without individual plates. "And every spring, mother gave us cream of tartar and sulphur with sugar or honey to clean the blood."

All afternoon grandfather sat at her bedside, taking a kind of strange personal, possessive pride in the clarity of grandmother's memory.

17 DECEMBER: Hugh and I went today into the bottoms, walking along the east shore of the Wisconsin, passing under the trestle of the railroad bridge, and going on down along a briefly used and now overgrown wagon trail to a bridge of timbers over the brook. On the meadow side of the stream, a few timbers were stacked in the sun. On these we sat to rest, to enjoy the sun's warmth and the mild air, looking over the sienna-colored meadow to the upland slopes rolling casually away to the east. Hugh observed a movement in the underbrush on the far side of the brook, and silently drew my attention to it. We watched; in a moment saw it again,

and finally discovered a weasel, almost totally white save for a brown portion of tail. The animal was weaving slowly in and out among the underbrush, making the willows to tremble a little, clearly on the trail of some creature destined to be his prey. He did not see us, obviously, for he pressed on, coming out of the underbrush, and making his way up the brook only to vanish abruptly down a grass-covered hole. We waited for him to reappear, and listened for sounds from the burrow down which he had gone; but nothing more happened; so presently we went on up the meadow, counting ourselves fortunate to have seen the creature at such close range.

22 DECEMBER: Grandmother Derleth—Genevieve van Damm Derleth—died at one-thirty this morning, and all I could think of, irrationally, when I learned of her going, was the way she used to smile when I went through her cupboards as a child in search of her good coffeecake, with her eyes twinkling tolerantly, and of that other, earlier time when I lay gravely wounded in her own bedroom, after a fall in the blacksmith shop, while she and aunt Virginia played grandmother's old music box for me. I stopped at the house on my way downtown. Grandfather was stolid but nevertheless deeply affected. I could not help praising their fifty-seven years of married life, whereat he took a crumb of comfort.

26 DECEMBER: This day after Christmas, grandmother's funeral. The day was bitterly cold, with a cutting wind from the northwest. Over all of us lay the weight of passing time, not so much regret at grandmother's death, for she had lived

almost eighty years, as at the symbol of change as inexorable as death. Coffin and flowers in the aisle at church conjured up a score of small memories, hitherto thought forever lost in memory. The priest spoke of her briefly as "a pioneer." So she was, certainly, in more ways than one. His quiet voice called her back again: the young girl, the mother, the old woman. I thought of her being a pioneer, turning it over and over in my mind, and remembered her gentleness with her flowers, the way her hands worked in her earth, the way she had known the path to my boy's heart in those early years.

At the cemetery the funeral directors had brought an old armchair for grandfather's convenience, and there he sat quietly, thin tears coming from time to time down his full cheeks to lose themselves briefly in his moustache and trickle slowly across his square jaw, almost frozen in the biting cold. The imitation greensward flung across the excavated earth as if to further conceal the finality of death and burial was incongruous in the snow-held landscape. A few flakes fell during the brief services, and the wind keened in the cedars.

2 JANUARY: After an all night's snowfall, with the sky still leaden and snow coming down, the temperature close to thirty, I went this afternoon into the marshes, and was lost at once in a dim, strange world, every bush and tree and weed hung heavy with the damp, clinging flakes, snow piled two inches high on every limb, bending cedars and pines low with its weight, capping teasel and mullein, dogbane and climbing false buckwheat pods. No path was broken in the foot-deep snow, and hidden drifts made walking difficult and treacherous, but no less exhilarating. No sound among the trees, an almost unnatural silence prevailed, and

the air was fresh and alive with the fragrance of wet snow. With trees pressing close and snow limiting vision, there was a feeling of limitless depth; it was as if the snow-hung trees and shrubs cut me away from Sac Prairie and all the world beyond, the falling flakes and the pattern of limbs against the gray sky endlessly interwoven without visible boundaries, without even small units, so deceptive was the wall of snow to the eye.

Even in the deep woods, little sound came to ear: the sliding of snow from an overloaded limb, the rustling of flakes among dry leaves still clinging to oak trees along the way, the occasional snap of a branch broken by the snow's weight, and subdued voices of wild life—kinglets, snow buntings, quail—and once the sudden rising of a jacksnipe from the brookside where it had been feeding, doubtless, at the water's edge. The brook's murmuring came muffled. Walking here with scarcely more noise than a woodland creature's footfalls in the deep snow, I made nevertheless enough diversion to startle a year-old buck, which rose up suddenly in a clump of prickly ash and black alder bushes, still red with their hollylike fruit, less than thirty feet away. The deer was a magnificent sight, bounding silently away into the snow which shrouded the more thickly wooded bottoms to eastward from the path I walked, and I stood looking after him as if to witness once more his easy, majestic flight. After he had disappeared I put down *Deer in Snow.*

Silent walking in the silent deeps of wood,
going as slowly as slow I ever could
and snow, snow falling thick, snow falling fast,
no sound, no creature passed:

walking among the strange world's white
emptiness, the pale half-light
of the snowstorm's heart,
walking alone, alone and silent, silent and apart:
I came upon the one live thing
in that snow-hung and silent place, watched him spring
to being there, in the moment's fading dread
saw how the proud and antlered head
held to the bush and the clear
eyes velvet without fear
looked briefly, briefly, briefly so—
and he went, was gone in silence into the world of silent snow.

Because of the deep snow, few trails were to be seen: one rabbit track, a fox's path just beyond the brook, and, after a while, another, deeper, more loping mark not so readily identified but seeming at last to be the spoor of a wolf, one having been reported only the previous day not far south of the brook's meandering course to the river, but whether timber or prairie wolf, it was impossible to say. Both have been seen hereabouts in winter, usually lone travelers, wandering from the north along the wooded slopes and ridges into southern Wisconsin. I remember hearing the howling of wolves in childhood, but in recent years never consciously, though occasionally a wolf has been slain on the Little Prairie west of the village, near Witwen. I followed this unfamiliar trail for a distance into the woods and out again at the edge of the Spring Slough, and then again into the thick brush, where I turned to leave the meadow for the railroad embankment, and there turned homeward, myself as covered

with snow as Whittier's clothesline posts which "looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts."

20 JANUARY: Sitting late this afternoon with Hugh in the old harness shop, waiting for the evening papers to come in from Madison, heard Nick Knectges overhead begin to saw away upon his fiddle, playing the same endless tune over and over, just a few bars with no particular melody to them, and apparently no theme. Perhaps it is all that he can play, all the tune he knows, though he has said that he used to play for old-time barn dances, and must know others. Still, for all the time Hugh and I have heard it at about this time of year, the dreariest season, and the longest month to pass, it is never unwelcome to our ears, and we can listen in silence to the thin sound from the upper floor, as if it were fresh and new, and imagine Nick, tired of repairing trinkets and mechanical gadgets, lay down his tools, take up his fiddle, scrape once or twice across the strings, and set forth upon his tune. He kept it up for half an hour, and then again all was silent; he had gone back to work, most likely, for his curtain was drawn low in the window when Hugh and I went for the papers.

27 JANUARY: Idling today in the harness shop, I saw Mr. Elpy leave his store, neatly pressed trousers on arm, and hurry up the street to the corner saloon, from which presently he emerged, still abustle, pants still on arm, and hurried back. How many a time he has done so—sometimes with a neatly done-up package, sometimes with a sweater on a hanger, with which he inevitably returns, as if to convey to any observer that he has made an error, brought the wrong

article, got the wrong size, or something akin. Sometimes he goes to the corner saloon, sometimes down the street to what was once Gluyk's place, sometimes across Water Street, never making an error of this kind at any other place of delivery—all this for the sake and appreciation of his wife, who never seems to understand that his feverish haste and frequent mistakes are all part of a primitive shrewdness, and continues placidly to sit behind the curtains in her parlor across the street and watch the store from there, feeling safe in asserting that Mr. Elpy no longer drinks. Hugh left his work to come over and talk about him briefly, remembering how he had often had sales, offering things at bargain prices, "at cost"—almost all of which showing signs of having been worn, he would advertise many a sweater, coat, and tie recognized from first sight on Mr. Elpy's torso. Finally Mr. Elpy sallied forth once more, the same pair of pants still on arm, and hastened down the street with a gravely preoccupied air that deceived no one except Mrs. Elpy, of whose awareness he could be as sure as of death and taxes.

3 FEBRUARY: The first flower of the coming spring is out —snow still on the ground in stubborn patches, and air chill —the hooded skunk cabbage, pushed out of the dark marsh soil. Its strong musk rises underfoot, and the mauve and purple-streaked hoods shelter a beautiful and little-known flower, a dark purple spathe with starlike yellow blossoms. I walked a short way tonight with Howard Walters, and in the course of a desultory discussion, he lowered his voice and said very enthusiastically, if intimately, that he had this day received some splendid "circs." I was puzzled as to

his meaning, but did not ask, since he assumed that I knew very well about what he spoke. He rambled on, therefore, while I was sorely perplexed, until at last it dawned upon me that he had reference to advertising circulars sent him for distribution, and I recalled his singular habit of shortening all long words to first syllables. His language therefore has in it often some striking and amusing effects.

4 FEBRUARY: I told Hugh today about Walters' "circs," and at once we held with mock solemnity a directors' meeting of the Town Characters Club, formally dubbing Walters, Circ, to be so known henceforth. He was long ago elected to honorary membership in the Town Characters Club, and I have come to believe that he belongs in that cherished group which already includes such likable members as Mr. Elpy, the bibulous pants-presser; Mr. Elky, the kindly religious fanatic; Mr. Syllaber, the salesman; and Mr. Elgy, the incomparable justice of the peace. To begin listing them all is manifestly impossible. I suppose, in one way or another, everyone might be accountable as a town character. Nevertheless, Hugh and I today made out a partial list of members and those eligible to membership (of course, all unbeknownst to them!), including ourselves, certainly; for I am afraid we cannot evade the fact that, judged by our own conditions for membership, we are prime eligibles. We arrived at the astonishing total of two hundred, approximately one tenth the combined population of Upper and Lower Sac Prairie!

Hugh laughed and asked, "Who's crazy now?"

Then, as if in silent reproof, Ellie Munn passed the shop. We had forgotten to list her. Every town has an Ellie Munn,

a homeliest girl: tall, gawky, with colorless eyes, freckled face, stringy hair: the girl about whom bashful boys are always teased with, "There goes his girl! He's stuck on Ellie Munn!" It was always so with Ellie, though, since she has married, Lina Beldon has taken her place. Ellie is a simple-hearted soul, still shy and faintly conscious of her lacking beauty, and in many ways quaint enough to merit membership in the Town Characters Club.

So Ellie was duly put down as number 201.

11 FEBRUARY: One of the village merchants has put out an amusing sign. Above the entrance to his place of business he has hung an old wasp's nest on a limb, decorated with this: "Come hither: You don't get stung here!"

17 FEBRUARY: Thomas came in today from the city to make a brief visit, but he was very dull; so I told him I needed to take a short hike in the woods, cold or no cold, whereupon he asked incredulously what hiking there might be in winter. "What is there to see? Why, there isn't even any color in the woods—everything is drab and dull, a monotonous white and brown and gray, with lines and curves cutting it here and there. That's the best of it." Thomas has made some claim to being an outdoorsman, but I realized at once that his claim was false, and was not displeased that he refused to accompany me; it is far better to walk alone than to stride along beside someone who knows no better than to talk, and looks about him all the time with a jaundiced eye; so I told him what one of my friends, a farmer, had said—"I like to go out into the fields and woods in winter, just to look around. I don't get much time to look

around any other season!" and left him to draw his own conclusion as to this simple appreciation, and how much truer it was in spirit to nature than his own. I suppose Thomas thought only of flamboyance in color; bloom and turning foliage: though there are always cardinals and jays to strike lively notes in the subdued winter scene. But there is, in fact, an infinite variety of color in a snow-blanketed landscape, and that Thomas should not know it does him no credit. Even among the trees there are all manner of colors: gray, brown, sienna, black, lichened boles, and all shadings; and the cedars with rust color, full green to blue; and a countless variety of lichen in pastel colors, orange and ochre; and dust-green fungi jutting in all kinds of strange shapes from upstanding trunks upon which the mark of death is clearly stamped. The osiers are bright red, the mustard pussywillows swelling and beginning to gray, the dry grass in the meadows a uniform tan, and shadings of brown and gray are endless among the long stalks of weeds and dried blooms, so that it is possible after long observation to pick out even from a distance which stalks are those of sunflowers, which of Joe-Pye weed, of ironweed and balmony, and always the winding vines and pods of wild cucumber or wild balsam apple, and of climbing false buckwheat. At the brook the water is blue, the cress green, the sand along the bank brown to golden in the sun. So off I went along the usual lowland route to the brook, leaving Thomas somewhat disgruntled but myself well satisfied.

27 FEBRUARY: While I paused in the drugstore today, waiting for the mail to come in, Circ came and stood for a bit with a rapt expression on his face, and his eyes alight

with some inner knowledge, standing so until he said abruptly, "I have a theory." His voice silenced everyone in the store; we looked at him, waiting to know his theory. He said that, as he was coming down the street, he had unconsciously made a small gruntlike sound while passing a tree, whereupon a bird had answered him in the same tone, and it had come to him as curious evidence of something he had thought for a long time—"That long ago man spoke to the birds and birds replied, and they understood each other, and since then this ability has been lost."

This occasioned some amusement, for his answering bird was doubtless a nuthatch, whose sound—*ur-ur-ur*—is from time to time not unlike a grunt. Circ however was deeply serious and resented anyone's laughter. His thought, moreover, was a pretty one. It seemed not impossible to me that he had been reading of St. Francis and the birds, and perhaps he had been feeding them and thus come to notice how willingly they came for food, once having become habited to feeding there, and how unafraid they become, and even saucy; or perhaps he had thought of a naturalist's way with birds, or a woodsman's, knowing bird signs, and their ways; so, even if his theory has its faults, its impulse may have been sound enough.

12 MARCH: Now for a third year, this day began the spring, for in the grove of willows, elms, and ash along the brook at Lenson's, the birds came back. Here they all are now, after the meager notes of the past week—on the sixth, a lone killdeer in the evening; on the eighth, a bluebird heard, and this doubtful for the mockery of starlings; on the ninth, some robins. But today at this selfsame place where they

have come first each year, the redwings flew in flocks, noisily chattering, to explore every familiar face of their land again, the meadow larks sang their hearts out in the Upper and Lower Meadows, the blackbirds cried, bluebirds chortled from the old willow trunks, and robins flew with an air of having been long in possession. Jacksnipe and woodcock cried down the sky, and deep in the willows a vesper sparrow sang. The meadows were gray with pussywillows, red with lithe branches of silky cornel or osier, commonly called dogwood hereabouts, and all along the brook, all up and down the Spring Slough and the lesser sloughs beside the embankment of the railroad, muskrats built industriously. No matter what cold may now come, the songs of April and May are potent magic to defy it.

17 MARCH: Coming into the drugstore today, I found Carl Lachmund much off color and inclined to be irritable. I plagued him to confess what troubled him, and presently learned that Circ had come into the store with mud on his shoes. Rudi had suggested that he clean them; so forthwith Circ went behind the counter and set to work. Carl found him applying polish over mud and leather alike, and suggested that he take the mud off his shoes first.

Circ looked up and asked, "Whose shoes are these?"

"Why, yours," answered Carl, taken aback.

"Then shut up," said Circ savagely.

Carl retreated to the front of the store, where he busied himself cleaning cases, and there presently Circ came, leather and mud well blackened, and paused to say, "Always respect your elders." He laughed ruefully, telling it now; and, indeed, it was to laugh. More expansive now, Carl told how one day

while Circ was at dinner at Lachmunds', Lil, his sister, was holding forth at some length about what cowardly men there were in her family, few of them with any marked backbone, and so on for the duration of the meal. Circ sat mouse-quiet all during the meal, and finally rose, excused himself, and walked to the door, where he turned on the threshold and said solemnly in a sepulchral voice, "I drove a truck in the War." Then he went out, his shoulders shaking with laughter all the way down the street.

20 MARCH: Today the first frog jumped quickly into the brook at my approach. Doubtless they have been about long before this, with the first warm sun, but today's small green frog was the first I have seen this year. In the bottoms this afternoon the first marsh wren of the season sang. I sat for a while on the brook trestle and listened to the tireless melody of the vesper sparrow's song. Apparently a six-note song with the fourth note double: *da-da-da-da-a-da-da:* is the pure song; but the variations are many. However, the initial three notes, sung usually with deliberation, seem invariable.

Sap flowed heavily today, ants were industrious in the ground, green-bottle flies buzzed lethargically around, and muskrats were busy in every body of water. The muskrats' fastidiousness was everywhere apparent: how clean they are! washing their heads with their paws in much the manner of cats, though using both forepaws at once instead of one, as does a cat. They dig up grass roots at this time of year and eat them, sitting on a log or at the edge of the stream with their food held in both forepaws, meticulously nibbling, and very often carefully washing their food first. They scratch themselves with their hind paws, and utter a petulant mur-

muring, urgent and irritated, when excited to anger, the sound being not unlike the sudden scolding rattle of a flicker, but muted and not as loud.

This evening rose the first Hyla song from the marshes: the Hyla bells. The season's first peepers' voices shrilled in the meadows, the *Hyla pickeringii,* together with a few songs from the *Hyla grylla,* the cricket-frogs; together, these Hylidae made a thin, feeble chorus, uncertain in the chill evening air, but nothing could give greater pleasure after the long winter and the deep snows, nothing could bring deeper contentment than these small, full-throated voices clamoring in the well of dark. The cricket frogs were soon still, but the peeper continued to cry out, making me presently to trouble my thoughts with a jingle that persisted:

The peeper who nightlong cries
with a voice four times his size. . . .

23 MARCH: In the lowlands today the wasps were out, snakes cut the water, all afternoon the Hylidae sang, and bats flew in dark places where old trees stood gaunt after winter; but on the hills the furry buds of pasque flowers were already well above ground. Year after year, they have always been and perhaps will always be the first blooms, now that the arbutus is gone from the near hills; year after year I watch for these pale, lavender-blue blossoms, and come to marvel at their hardiness in resisting cold and winds, which sometimes all but tear them from the ground. The date of the first pasque flower is solemnly recorded year after year, ever since Robert Barker, an interloper on the hills, met Hugh and me one day clutching in his big fist the first lavender bloom, triumphantly informing us that it was the first one. He left us speechless: a casual walker on his way to see the first pasque flower, but worse, *to pick it!*

24 MARCH: Pausing at grandfather Derleth's house today, I was greeted by the fresh, clear blue of the squills in their little round beds; they are blossoming all over town now before houses where old ladies live. I thought of grandmother, and I thought of this being the first spring she is not here to putter about in her garden: no more the small, prim body, the merry eyes that faded so in the last years. Grandfather sat out on his bench and looked at the squills and knew, too; he remembered the springs long before I was here, before even father was; the squills were here then, the same fragile blue stars on their frail stems, and when he spoke of the warmth in the air, his eyes were seeing grandmother again, bent over the bed, grubbing in the good earth with her worn fingers.

29 MARCH: Hugh and I stood on the bridge tonight in a south wind bearing up the spring. The temperature was mild, thaw and its fragrance lay in the air, and the wind bore the rich, heavy musk of the river, risen now with the odor from the melting snows in the far north, flowing past Sac Prairie to the Mississippi and the distant Gulf. The sky was bright with stars—Leo above, Arcturus glowing amber in the northeast; and the stars were mirrored in the uneasy face of the water, so that, what with reflection and the ice cakes floating down the night's dark, the water appeared as another heaven below. No sound came save for the voices of the river and the faint susurration of the wind, the spring wind that seemed to grow from the star-swept sky in the deep south, from somewhere beyond Orion great in the heavens there, and carried to us here all the aspects of field and woodland, all the songs of birds and the face of the land in flower soon again. We were oblivious to everything but the wind, leaving us in a dream of spring. If a jacksnipe flew whistling overhead, we were unaware of it; if a killdeer cried, we did not hear it; if a fish cut the water beneath, the sound was lost among the myriad small sounds of the river around the piers. The wind tonight was symbol: almost as illusory as the freedom of it symbolized—timeless, measured by no year, no decade, no century; the infallible friend of the woodsman, the first voice of every season, and yet more —sometimes on nights when everything is still and the wind seems to come from some incredible haven beyond moon and stars, lending to life a conviction of inconceivable well-being, something there is in the wind's gentle laving of flesh and spirit which brings in the shadow of its wings an ineffable peace. Always I have loved the wind and its magic.

6 APRIL: Today occurred an event unusual for the village: an exhumation to determine whether or not the dead man died a natural death or was poisoned, dark rumors having been circulated for some time, and his brother now convinced that he had fallen victim to a band of criminals. Since the alleged victim had been in his grave for some time, the prospect of making any discovery of importance was remote. Nevertheless, went tonight with Harold to the back rooms of the undertaking parlors, where the curious had foregathered, among them the county coroner, whose knowledge of the duties of his office was apparently something he had forgotten to get before getting himself elected. He was, unfortunately, not an M.D. himself, but had previously been engaged in the often more lucrative business of burying the dead. An exhumation was something not only utterly alien to him, but peculiarly against his nature, and it was plain to see that he was not relishing his task. Being introduced to Harold, who had his M.D., he heaved a great sigh of relief and instructed Harold to proceed with the autopsy, "and get it over with; then we can put him back where he belongs." He essayed a grin at this, but his grin faded and died when Harold, after overcoming his astonishment, said that he could not perform an autopsy.

"What's the matter? You're a doctor, aren't you?" demanded the coroner, very skeptical and belligerent about Harold's refusal to proceed with the autopsy.

Harold explained patiently, though from the way his mouth twitched it was patent that his impulse was to anything but patience. The coroner accepted his explanation with very ill grace, which was natural enough considering that it made him look much the fool, and everyone settled

back to wait—the coroner pacing the floor, the dead man's brother like a hound long on the scent and prevented now from reaching his quarry by only a few technical words and a mass of red tape, some Village Board members to serve as a coroner's jury, the undertakers, two deputies, Harold, and myself. The combined workroom and office, poorly lit by two small globes, was warmed by a small iron stove, now bright with heat, so that it was almost insufferable in the room. The corpse had long since been moved into the adjoining room. Presently it emerged that the assemblage awaited the arrival of the district attorney.

The district attorney, however, did not come, and presently he was telephoned. He said he was too busy to come, which occasioned great concern. "He's dead, isn't he? He won't run off until I can get there." It was explained to him that the corpse had been exhumed without benefit of a permit, whereupon the district attorney indulged in some picturesque expletives, after the heat of which had died away, revealing that he was none too sure about what to do next. "He's dug up; so I guess we'll have to put out a permit." But still he would not come down.

Tension eased a little; the deputies and the Board members began to relate anecdotes, most of them with an appropriate graveyard flavor. The hot room grew hotter still, and the laughter rising occasionally seemed only to irritate the dead man's brother. The coroner looked uncomfortable until at last Harold took over, persuaded everyone to wait until the body could be taken in to Madison and competent men got to work on it, whereupon the party dispersed, and I went back up to Harold's place, listening to his forthright indignation about the coroner's ignorance.

10 APRIL: After a rain this evening, Hugh and I went into the marshes to enjoy the heavenly odor of every shoot and stem, each bush and tree, bud and blade—all giving off a faint exhalation and together sweetening and perfuming the air as no man-made scent ever could. The Hyla choir sang full-throated. The brook through the bottoms north of the railroad bridge was up, and the dam Hugh and I had made some days ago inadequate; so we set to it to build another, and another, made a lake, raised and lowered water levels, and had three splendid falls, a beautiful and musical cascade of water. How pleasant its sound! I cannot pass a brook without knowing my feet to drag, without wanting to go to it and take sticks, stones, sand, and leaves and build a dam. I hope I will never lose this joy.

11 APRIL: This morning, Saturday, with little mail to hold me to my desk, I went down along the Wisconsin's east shore to the brook to see how our dams had survived the night. Alas! all were gone, and at once I got at the building of them again, with more care this time, but soon saw that only one was practical; three made too much stir in the water and brought about too great an erosion at the sides; a dam in this narrow spot would be impossible with the banks gone; so reluctantly I relinquished the thought of more than one dam. I built the one to be more permanent this time, and climbed up the bank to sit on the log: an old cottonwood long ago fallen among its fellows. The trees towered above, some of their yellow buds open and mauve catkins hanging down with an odor so delicate as to be almost imperceptible. Sunlight flecked the water and the sand, a faint warm wind came from the south, the sky was blue,

with white clouds towering over the hills to the north, and, most magnificent of all, a broad-winged hawk soaring and turning in the sun, so that his tailfeathers flashed golden above the red and yellow-budded branches—a sight truly beautiful and worthy of far better poems than any I have done. Nevertheless, saluted him in a few lines.

Golden his feathers in the sun.

Call him broad-wing, red-tail: or have done
with any word confining him.

Mark his effortless wheel, his turning
to bright fire burning,
his orbit on the height, become a lesser sun.

Coming home tonight near the witching hour, I saw in the northeast sky a star fall from the vicinity of Arcturus. It curved across the sky leaving a brilliant blue-green tail which lasted a full trio of moments before fading, and made a striking sight above the village asleep and still; and I thought of the eternal sky changing with each hour, the bright aliveness and death of this meteorite in the vastness, the immensity of space—so far, so great, that no score of lifetimes might reach it, and only the glass of the largest telescopes to tell even a little about it. I thought of old magic, old fear of things unknown, old worship, and I thought, God or nature, fellowman or State, the necessity of worship is strong, the necessity of something to which to cling, man's mind being too little, too pitiful to grasp at the infinite boundaries beyond this little place that is earth. And I think perhaps it is better so.

12 APRIL: The first hepaticas flowered today in Wright's Valley, the first frail lavender and blue white-edged petals opening to the little sunlight slanting among the boles of trees down the slope. Every year I have watched for them: not alone for their beauty, but because the sentimentalist in me remembers with sweet nostalgia and sees in them the symbol of everything lost in that fragile first love for Margery, the flowers blooming still on the same slope to which we used to come for secret, stolen hours, to sit saying nothing or speaking only meaningless words for afternoons at a time. Small things endowed with dearness and past pleasure, a clue to remembrance, and these blossoms bridging years to the brief bitter sorrow and the unalloyed joy of first love. They wave in the wind as bravely as if frost would never come again, and are singularly beautiful among the brown leaves all around. I sat on the slope and contemplated them while time sped by and the sun went westering.

21 APRIL: Had occasion tonight to deliver some papers to Circ, and found him in the midst of scattered envelopes, letters, clippings: his files, he said. He was gnomelike, and was talking to himself with many gestures and a resounding oath or two, which ceased abruptly at my entrance. He thanked me quietly enough for the papers and showed me some magazines of varying interest. Presently he handed me four books by an author he said he admired very much; examining them, I found them to be by four different authors, none of whom he had mentioned. I strove to call this to his attention, but he, scrutinizing them once more, said with a superior gravity that of course they were all by his favorite author and

eyed me a little askance, as if in some doubt about my senses.

I shied away from the subject of the books and listened to Circ hold forth about certain business transactions of his. He offered to show me his letters from the house of Macmillan, and plunged with fervor into a mass of crudely arranged clippings and letters on his desk, saying, "They should be under *M*." But he reached into a compartment plainly marked *S*, and gravely thumbed through them, before putting them down, saying, "I see these are the *Y*'s." Thereupon he reached into a compartment as plainly labeled *E*, myself reeling meanwhile. He thumbed these over with equal patience, and again went through the same process, identifying them as the *D*'s, before he took another bundle from *L*, and there, fortunately for my tottering senses, he found the letters, handing them to me with a triumphant leer as if to say that he had known they were there all the time. I read the letters and escaped as quickly as possible.

3 MAY: Went tonight to call on Circ, but paused with hand upraised to knock, upon hearing voices from within, and, much mystified, peered through the window to see Circ sitting alone at his table with many papers as usual scattered all about, his hat on, and the light hung low. He was talking to himself, dramatizing something apparently for children, changing his voice from falsetto to natural, so that the effect was of more than one person. I listened briefly.

"And what do you say?" (In his natural voice.)

"I say yes!" (In a child's falsetto.)

"And what do you say?"

"I say yes!" (A child's timid squeak.)

"And what do *you* say?"

"I say *NO!*" (Mature child's voice.)

Following this, I stole away, deferring my visit until some more auspicious moment, but later in the evening, coming by with Hugh, I had in mind completing my call, and paused again to peer through the window, just in time to see Circ wheel dramatically, level an accusing finger directly at us beyond the pane, and shout, "Go to the devil, Sir—that's what she said!" I deferred my visit indefinitely.

20 MAY: An umbrella mender came to the door this morning, and I sat for a while on the steps talking to him: a man already advanced in years, gray and wrinkled, but patient. He walked from village to village to ply his trade, he said. "There are always umbrellas to mend." He did not complain if he found their number less in these past years, or people less eager to give them to him. He was the first to have paid us a visit for some time, and I reflected nostalgically that of all those familiar figures of my childhood, only the ragman remains as constant as always, and he now passes swiftly in trucks, no longer with wagon and mare. Talking to the umbrella mender, I thought suddenly how much I had missed the scissors-grinder, and at once he came back to memory: a slight little man with his apparatus worn over his shoulders, walking down the middle of the dusty street, ringing his bell and calling out, "Sciss-ors and knives!" until the very birds were still. If he paused, it was not for long; his work was soon done, and soon his voice and the pleasant sound of the bell drifted together away down the street, sometimes to sound again in another part of the village, or in Upper Sac Prairie, as lusty as ever. The umbrella mender brought his kin back with him, together with

an indefinable aura of time past, which lingered for hours after he had gone.

8 JUNE: Peter Ehl called me across the street this morning to look at his rambler rose bush, truly a beautiful sight with hundreds of blossoms pink against the old red and yellow bricks of his south wall, at the moment being explored and invaded by his bees, thick in the air there. The hives were ranged along the slope in the warm sun; from them came the bees, blurring the air with industry. I followed him down the steps among the bees, which he wished to show me at work. He offered me a bee net, but I rejected it and he was surprised, for he himself wore his netted hat, though he went quite gloveless to raise the top of a hive and reveal the bees at their ceaseless labor. He was a little afraid, he said, that it might rain. "They're making linden honey now, and the rain would just beat the flowers down to the ground; there wouldn't be much honey from the basswoods then." I stood enjoying his speech, still rich with a burr of German in it, and found it fully as pleasant as the somnolent humming of the bees in the morning's drowsy sunlight. He was very much the German burgher still: dark-eyed, florid-faced, with a moustache, his body thick and Teutonic, and the whole appearance of him lending substance to the modest signs put up before his little house on Water Street: *Rug Weaving* and *Honey for Sale.*

Presently he took me into his cool old cellar room where his looms were, on them this morning a half-finished rug. Mrs. Ehl came down to join us, hustling her agile body as if it were something apart from her and designed to wait upon her and everyone else as well. Her eyes twinkled and

snapped, her voice had a kind of urgent, but kindly, shrillness. He and she carried on immediately a kind of intimate colloquy as to what kind of wine I should be offered, all in German, whereupon I interrupted to say that they should not trouble themselves; but at this both of them scuttled into activity, each one produced a bottle of wine, and there was nothing for it but I must sample both, one sweet, one dry. Both were good. I sat on the thick stone windowsill in the room's coolness, looking out upon the same Ehl's Slough where so often as a boy I had fished for bluegills and bass, and listened to the crackle of their conversation. Sunlight yellow on the floor, the settled complacency of their voices, the humming of bees among the roses and the linden blossoms outside made a shell of warmth that cradled us away from passing time in brief illusion. They were pleased, and said so, that I could still understand German. I assured them that I could, but that I did not trust myself to speak it because of the adulteration of the language so prevalent in Sac Prairie. I thought there was something birdlike about her, in fitting contrast to his stolid solidness, and sat for almost an hour talking, ending up by ordering some honey held for me when it was ready, and then took my departure, coming out of that cellar to Water Street as into another world—and indeed it is.

17 JUNE: Despite a cloudy sky with only occasional sunlight streaming through, I went leisurely over the river to the long-familiar hills this afternoon, carrying a book and a portion of my most recent manuscript to revise. I followed the old path along the hills to the Big Hill, where I went back from the dip to sit beneath the elm. I was not long

there before I saw Gus in the field northeast of the hill, just over the fence, and went down to talk to him. He pointed to a large bullsnake suspended from one of the oak's limbs; his hired man had killed it and left it there for the crows to devour. I could not help deprecating; bullsnakes were too valuable to any farmer to be so wantonly destroyed, and, warming up, treated him to quite an address on the value of snakes, bats, hawks, owls, and even managed to put in a good word for English sparrows and crows. Gus, however, remained properly skeptical.

Returning to the hilltop, I saw in the distance over the prairie west of the village a wall of rain approach, and watched it, fascinated by the change in color that came upon sky and earth simultaneously with the line of falling water from above: a well-defined line, gray-white in color with an aspect of blue doubtless caught from the eastern sky. Calculating that I could not be trapped in it, I saw the wall divide, the clouds pulling apart as if a wind had buffeted them suddenly from behind, and one half of the rain moved down around the Ferry Bluff and across the river there to Wisconsin Heights and eastward, the other half circling the prairie, skirting the northwestern edge of the village, and passing northeastward along the Baraboo Bluffs. Soon the sun shone again, the far hills gleamed and glistened in their wetness, and the wind brought the wild fresh sweetness of foliage and rain. I set to work once more, but in half an hour noticed another cloud gathering in the west, and again watched the rain advance, rapidly engulfing Ferry Bluff and the western hills. I gathered books, manuscript, and newspaper in preparation for flight, but could not tear myself from the dip on the hilltop, standing there on the

hill's head in the rising wind and watching the wall of rain come on, obliterating lines of hills, groves, the village's western edge. It was apparent even now that I could not reach shelter; the clouds were caught by wind and fanned out, so that the first raindrops caught me still watching. Even then I was loath to go, and believed that the wind might quickly dispel the clouds. Alas! it served only to spread them over the entire sky, and in a moment rain poured down, and I fled to the shelter of an oak and cedar grove in the hollow north of the hill, crouching there under a newspaper, striving not to get wet. But presently water ran down the slope and forced me to my feet; the newspaper drooped soggily, cold water trickled down, uncomfortably, and finally thunder rolled, lightning struck and crashed a tree near by, and I deserted the hollow, crossing over the hill in a blinding downpour and arriving finally at the bathing house, soaking wet but for manuscript and book, which had managed to stay dry in a thick wrapping of newspapers.

I undressed and wrung out my clothes, to the laughter of bathers who had come up from the river, and afterward made my way to town again, the shower having now passed. I was forced to buy dry clothes: shirt, shorts, socks, slippers, and trousers: and estimated that my pleasure and instruction in the way of rain could be said to have cost me $2.83, which I paid for dry clothing. All things accounted, this was not too high a price.

18 JUNE: While wondering this morning how long it would take the French *voyageurs* in *Wind Over Wisconsin* to travel by canoe down-river from here to Prairie du Chien, I asked Sam Schroeder, meeting him on Water Street and remember-

ing that I had heard of his having made this trip. I expected him to reply that it could be done in a day, and listened patiently to his rambling account, only to be astounded to hear him say it had taken him a month! I knew this was manifestly too long, and explained in greater detail why I had asked, whereupon he explained that the party he had accompanied had gone in Otto Hiddessen's houseboat, fishing and encountering sandbars to delay them. He conceded finally that they might have made it in "two weeks or so," and after some further aimless and unconnected rambling, opined that with a canoe it might be done in "a long day or two."

He was not helpful, but in the course of his rambling speech, he let fall a few of his usual boners, which I imagine he pronounces as best he knows how from his reading. His substitution of words is sometimes surprising. He said of some airmen that the "avigators had missed their destitution"; for the conservation commission he said every time "the conversation commission"; about one phase of camping life along the river he said "tar-boiled eggs"; and of a politician he said the old man had a "draft."

25 JUNE: Today in a pouring rain a knight of the road knocked on the back door and asked for food. Mother gave him some lunch, a little cagily, and I came out to sit and talk with him. He was still young, in his thirties, to judge by his appearance, but his eyes had begun to harden: a pleasant blue, however; and his face was frank, if somewhat begrimed. His clothes were still good, and gave some evidence of care. He was polite but was not humble, which was good and pleasant. He had come down from St. Paul, he

said, having a hard time of it, and he wanted work. He asked for the name of the local canning company manager, and I gave it to him and directed him to the house, but on second thought, for fear that he might startle Annie Schorer, sent him instead to the factory. Thither he went after lunch, rain having fortunately let up and the sun coming through. I wished him luck.

29 JUNE: On my way to the hills today, I saw two boys setting forth along the river with cane poles and Prince Albert cans full of angleworms in the hind pockets of their overalls. Neither carried a reel. They were obviously going still-fishing, which brought me to reflect upon still-fishing as a forgotten art.

I often think its time has passed, together with the horse and buggy, save for old men who sit endlessly in summer and autumn afternoons along the river's shores, poles stuck into the sand beside them, and lines sometimes with corks, sometimes without, in quiet places away from the Wisconsin's current. Time was when the still-fisherman's number was legion, but it is certainly no longer so. The skilled angler has gained the ascendancy, but to the still-fisherman, the angler's skill is lost; it has no part in his quiet, meditative sport, for all that it may not be unknown to him. There is some tendency on the part of certain angling gentlemen to look down their noses upon their humbler brethren, and perhaps on the other side a kind of primitive disapproval of the angler's devotion to fly and plug. However they may feel toward one another, they have in common a blessed and unequaled solitude.

Because the angler must devote his attention largely to

the pursuit of his sport, the still-fisherman has more time for solitary thought. In this lies the charm of still-fishing. He may find himself a likely spot along the river, the pond, or the lake, may bait his hook and sit back to enjoy what is as close to genuine freedom as man ever gets. If he uses a cork —and there is an untiring delight in watching the tentative duckings of a cork—he must of necessity keep his gaze upon it or glance at it from time to time; if he does not, he need not even do this, he need only feel with his hands the tremor which indicates the nibbling and the strike, and in time he can know easily enough by the feel of this trembling alone what has found his bait, whether chub or crappie, sunfish or bass, sucker or catfish; he comes to distinguish as surely among them as a naturalist identifies the sparrows by the variety of their songs.

His time is his own, once he has chosen his quiet pool, his sun-dappled bank, once his baited hook has broken water; he can sit in his boat or lie on his bank, whether in June or October. He can indulge to the full his senses, the luxury of this brief freedom, the countless odors of blossoms in air, of cut hay from near-by fields, and the smells of water, of ponds and sloughs, the ever-changing odor of the river, which he can come to know so well that he need not open an eye nor trust to ears to recognize whether the river is rising or falling, but can tell it by the smell alone. His thoughts can go wandering, even as the thoughts of the child he once was went afar; perhaps long ago he lay here on this bank and built castles in the air, saw ships in the clouds; there is nothing to stop him from doing so again today. He has the free air, the pleasant music of water, the sky, earth, the sunlight—and richer is no man! He need not

chide himself for loafing, for here he is getting his supper, with any luck at all, and enjoying recreation besides, and he knows well enough that without his pole and his sport, he would not have the blissful freedom of his thoughts, and without the latter, he would not take pleasure in his afternoon. The one for him is bound up inextricably with the other. The still, sunlit water, the softly murmuring woods, the fragrant air: these are the trappings of peace; better than any other, save only the naturalist, the still-fisherman knows its luxury.

17 JULY: I was stopped today on Water Street by Mr. Elky, and given one of his tracts, which I read, knowing it would not make much sense, save a dim, tortured perception. I had the feeling anew that he is striving mightily and sincerely enough to explain what he conceives to be fundamental truths, and which doubtless exist as such for him, and perhaps in their essence for many persons. His preoccupation with theology is harmless, however, and the only facet of his personality to mark an otherwise congenial and in every way pleasant old man. I remember on one occasion many years ago bringing a clock to be repaired in his ancient shop and finding him literally aglow with a deep joy. To me he proclaimed the conclusion to which he had evidently just come in his wilderness of thought. "Might is Light, and Light is Right; therefore, I am God!" It alarmed me, and I escaped. I have often since wished that I had had the courage to stay; I still wonder what might have come after.

He is still on much the same subject: what is right and what not: and still, on the least occasion, he will wander off into a heated exposition of his chosen subject. "What is this

that is not to you as it is to me?" he will ask, and he will accept no answer but agreement, wholehearted agreement. Perhaps there is something to be said for his absolutism. "I know that a thought is a Spirit, and a thought that will think is alive. I know where those thoughts will come to a head; they will form knowledge in our head as well as in God's head. I know that God knows everything, as his Spirit is all knowing. Why should he then not know everything? If our God, who is our righteous God, is a Spirit, that is the life of every living soul. I know that this Spirit that is my Soul is the knowledge of God." Thus he speaks, and so he writes: a tortured maze of effort to understand something beyond understanding, to bring closer the limitless boundaries of theology, and yet something beyond this.

He returns endlessly to the subject of *light.* On an earlier occasion he wrote: "I know that our light comes from the sun. I know that we have small lights. I know that we have small rights. But right is right, and light is light, and if we follow where this light comes from, we will have fire." It has a strange kind of logic, a sort of dream-world logic to be looked upon from a distance, as through an imperfect glass.

The tract he handed me today was headed *The Master Key.* It is the epitome of Elky's twisted theology. "The Master Key is the Spirit by which all things can be proved, and this Spirit is the life of every living Soul. This Spirit has created and made everything that has been made, and everything that has been created and made by this Spirit that is our life is 'all-knowing.' For our knowledge knows everything from the smallest to the largest. So 'our knowledge' is *our God.* Our God who is our righteous God is a Spirit; this Spirit is the life of every living Soul. So our Soul

is what we know, and what we know, God knows, for God is all-knowing. So this Spirit that is our life is the Spirit that we breathe into our nostrils, that is the good Spirit that is the Spirit of God. The evil Spirit is the Spirit that comes out of our bodies, the Spirit that blasphemes, the Spirit that does not speak the truth, the bad Spirit which is the Spirit of the Devil, Satan, and the Serpent. Which lies and deceives and misleads. The Spirit of God is right and is the Truth which is Love. So love this Spirit that is your life with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your soul. And love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two commandments hang all the rest."

I did not have time to discuss these matters with him today, and was sorry to disappoint him. For he was manifestly disappointed, stimulated and refreshed as he is by argument, no matter how unfavorable. A kind and gentle old man, a lover of nature and of children, he must every little while pass out his tracts; he "breaks out," so to speak, like a recurrent epidemic. He asks nothing but a little attention, he does not mind ridicule, he is convinced of his rightness, and nothing will change him. Bless him, and may his tribe increase!

27 AUGUST: With mother, aunt Bertha, and cousin August drove west today into the Plain and White Mounds country to examine the territory designed to be the setting for *Stars Wore Westward.* The day was cloudy but warm. The fragrance of corn and of rain held the quiet air. Our first objective was aunt Annie's old farm, the old place high on the hill midway between Spring Green and Plain, with the woods and fields behind it and the Lone Rock Valley in a

blue haze to the south. I left the car there to take a few photographs, contemplating boyhood gone. Everything was much the same, except, of course, that aunt Annie no longer lived there—the barn where so often I had lain in aromatic hay and was once almost sent down into the manger with a slide of fodder (and where, too, I tried vainly to milk a cow, greatly trying the patient creature before I discovered that she had just been milked); the house with its cottonwood and poplar trees before it, and the low porch where whippoorwills came of evenings and sang their lonely songs; the orchard, where I had climbed time and again into the gnarled old apple trees, looking off nostalgically into the direction of Sac Prairie; the deep valley across the highway before the house, the valley from which the nocturnal singers came, and where one day beside a stump I found my first whippoorwill's nest, with two eggs in it. I thought of how black-eyed cousin Olie, cousin Wilbert, and the rest of us went down along the deep woods trails or back into the Pocket to visit friends and other relatives, and I wondered whether the sweet wild strawberries still grew so profusely, so largely in the thick grass of the ridge bordering the hollow where cousin Florence lived then, a far way beyond the house, through the fields, the oak grove, a long pasture, and down the ridge where flowers starred the grass into the hollow. But I would not go to see, knowing that magic holds only from time's distance.

Going on to Plain, went down the long winding slope where one night an uncle of mine, lordly drunk, went over the bank into the deep ravine, car and all, and was not even scratched, whereat my aunt Annie laughed immoderately and always thereafter said: "He was so mean God didn't

want him and the devil had no use for him." In the course of this short drive, passed the old Blau barn, and I remembered as vividly as if it were yesterday the barn dance there when cousin Ray was married, myself sitting in the hay beside a delicate, well-dressed city cousin, watching the dancers doing squares and reels and circle two-steps and schottisches to the twangy melodies of two fiddles and an accordion.

North of Plain along the White Mounds road, a way not traveled for many years and yet one which was familiar, stirring from far back in the channels of memory turns and jutting rocks and meadows and hill slopes become familiar even before we came upon them, I caught sight of aunt Annie's first place, an old limestone house set among a grove of pines in the middle of a bottomland meadow through which for miles a brook meandered, and my memory of it came back: as a dark house, perhaps because of the close-pressing trees, a house best remembered with yellow lamplight on its old walls and floors, and the night wind's keening in the pines. We left the highway presently and dipped into the hill country to the abandoned Gelhaus homestead, following a little-used trail to the almost hidden cellar place, with its old rafters still about, the Gelhaus place, put up before the Civil War. There were also immense old lilac bushes and apple trees, long uncared for and yet yielding a pungent fruit, good with a *clean,* fresh taste, some of which we gathered to take back to grandmother Volk, the sentiment of bringing her something from her childhood home appealing to us. Deep in the woods behind the cellar was the spring, about which grandmother has talked so often: where she used to go for water as a girl, a clear, crystal cold stream,

dropping from a pipe sunk into the slope to run down along a stony bed toward the distant field. We drank some of the water, which had a pleasant, refreshing taste, as most spring water around Sac Prairie does.

From the old homestead, we returned to the road, crossed the meadow, and went to the White Mounds cemetery, a small square of land under towering white pines, a beautiful sight, and old, so *old!* I went up to see the stones and the names on them, so often mentioned by grandmother: Carpenter, Henry, Bandel: and stood there in the shade of the apple tree that crowded almost too closely upon the two stones we had come to see: "Anthony Wesley, Died December 3, 1881, 65 years, 9 months, 12 days," and "Catherine Gelhaus Wesley, November 18, 1836—October 28, 1915": great-grandmother Catherine Hugobach Gelhaus with her second husband. I stood in brief homage to these two, and that other shadowy third, great-grandfather Gelhaus, whose troubled ghost may be near, though his dust has long since ceased to stir in whatever unknown earth he may lie between here and New Orleans, wherever he fell in battle or was lost or slain. I found on one of the fallen stones there an oft-encountered epitaph:

Afflictions sore long I bore,
Physicians were in vain;
Till God did please to bear me home
And ease me from my pain.

Just over the hills lay cousin Lizzie's place, and we stopped there, finding cousin Polly there too, jolly and gay as ever. In a little while, cousin John came along. I went into the locked front room, still the same old-fashioned parlor I re-

membered from childhood, and looked at the player piano, the only one I had known in those days, upon which I used to pump *A Life on the Ocean Wave* time and again. I helped John and August to pick a sack of apples for mother to put down, while mother and Bertha talked and cousin Lizzie picked out a watermelon to cut. We ate the melon in the kitchen, in an atmosphere very pleasant and congenial indeed. With Lizzie and Polly laughter is second nature, despite, as mother would put it, the troubles they've all had. Even now, mother affirms, no one can understand why cousin Lizzie is alive. I remembered how often she has been given up: cousin Lizzie, with only one kidney left: how often pronounced near death. But I reflected that on the Volk side of the family, they are all alarmists, ready to cry *wolf* at the merest flick of a cottontail's ear. Leaving there, we turned down the valley toward Honey Creek and home.

Grandmother Volk was as delighted as a child to have the apples and flowers from the old homestead, and it was a joy forever to see her old eyes light up, and her smile come, and to hear the reminiscences that came after.

28 AUGUST: Coming out of the park on my way downtown this morning, I was arrested while crossing the road at the corner by a child's voice calling me and, looking around, finally spied him—Dexter Meise, a dark-eyed child consumed by an endless curiosity about many trivial things—of all places, sitting complacently on the toilet, with the door wide open facing the street, he not a whit abashed, though his trousers hung down about his swinging legs. He shouted to know why I did not have my cane, and I told him, in the course of which his sister came running out of the barn

and demanded to be told where he had put the ball. This he informed her in a shrill, carrying voice which must certainly have drawn the attention of anyone about. Neither child was in any way self-conscious, and no one came rushing to call to him to shut the door and excrete less publicly. I could not help smiling at the naïve naturalness of it.

2 SEPTEMBER: A still, beautiful night, darkness alive with subdued cries of nighthawks, whippoorwills, owls, Hylidae, a lone killdeer, the stridulations of katydids and crickets, and the far *krark, krark* of a great blue heron winging its way upriver. In the hills dogs barked, and beside the railroad tracks along the embankment across the Wisconsin, lesser creatures made their secret scuttering in passing among grass and leaves. I walked down the railroad, crossing opposite the Triangle to sit on the pasture gate beside the highway and watch the moon rise redly over the cornfield, its light slanting down the cornrows and over the road: a deep yellow light, almost golden at first, changing to a strange green-white glow in the late summer haze when the moon had risen higher. Not far south of the moon, Fomalhaut shone. Dwelling upon this scene, I wrote *Harvest Moon* by moonlight.

Out of the evening haze,
out of the apple smell,
plum smell, fragrance of corn,
the moon comes up:
great, round, orange,
like a smoke god,
a pumpkin god,

like something Indians forgot,
left to be born again:
comes up behind the old rail fence,
the elm bent over, cornshocks
row on row in the stubble field.
In deep grass the crickets mourn,
the katydids sing; along the distant lane
the threshers' whistle pipes;
and cornleaves rustle and murmur,
murmur and rustle without wind.

Over the hills,
out of the smoky haze
the moon comes,
after Andromeda, after Aries,
after the summer gone:
over the cornshocks
rises and hangs
ripe as apples sweet in air,
mellow as plums down pasture's edge;
under the maple, under the ash,
hangs under elm's spread limb.
Among the oak's gnarled boughs
leaves break away
one by one, drift, fall without sound
at the year's ripe touch.

Pale yellow light, pale lemon sheen,
smoky and dim,
orange gone to ochre and yellow, moon
hangs with its light

slanted down hills, down cornrows,
old fence:
softens the stubble,
soothes the old wood,
over all earth, over all water
says: how beautiful
in dying,
how beautiful is death!

After half an hour, I went up the Mazomanie road and lost the moon behind the low Ganser Hills, but all the time there was that secret glow against which the gnarled oaks ranged from the hillslopes to the sky, the far stars above, and fragrance in the air: of dodder, hay, cut corn, the cloying miasma of the lowlands. Passing a dip in the hills, I saw the moon begin to rise and stood to watch it, waiting until

its light slanted down the slopes, the orange glow of it in the haze topping into whiteness beyond the hills with a strange, secret glory: so that I watched it rise again and again, moving forward and back so that I might see this miracle of beauty repeated anew, each time a little farther up the slope, each time behind different trees: the orange glow rising, the yellow-white moon, the hidden life among the trees, dark and still in the moon's brightness.

22 SEPTEMBER: This is the last day for the peepers: one faint voice piping away in the upper reaches of the Spring Slough. It was sweet and nostalgic. Hugh and I heard it on our way up the road from the pasture gate where we had been sitting: a last spring sound, apart from red-wing chatter which would reach later into autumn; and we stood for a while listening to it. How uncertain it seemed in contrast to the choir of March and April, how slight against the chill of frost already in air!

19 OCTOBER: I went up among the northeast bluffs this afternoon, carrying book and paper, climbing until at last I stood upon one of the tall slopes so clearly seen from Sac Prairie, and looked down upon the fair earth below: fields with corn stacked in even rows, pastures, gullies, and distant wooded slopes in heavenly color in the clear, warm sunlight like mellow wine upon the ground: houses snug against the earth, the river winding bluely away, a sheen of silver in wind and sun: and the village lying lazily to westward and south along the farther shore. From this place I walked back along the slope and came upon a gnarled old apple tree, still a dark green, and bearing small red crab apples so thickly that leaf, twig, and branch were crowded. I lost no time in

taking up a few to taste, finding them very succulent with a kind of tart sweetness: rather a sour crab sweetened by sun and weather, than a sweet crab. There is nothing so pleasant in autumn wandering as to come upon some woodland tree growing wild and taste of its fruit, be it bitter or sweet, and all the greater delight if the latter. So I sat for a while under the tree, noticing that no one had trimmed or in any way tended it, that many apples had already gone to rot upon the ground, and that those I now devoured were certainly the better for a frost or two. The apples' meat was snow white, the seeds dark brown. I ate a dozen of them, and did not neglect to fill my pockets. Near by in a tree sat a squirrel engaged, like myself, in eating the apples, and watching him, with the red apples hanging in a corner of my sight, I paused long enough to write *Wild Apples: Salute to Johnny Appleseed.*

Johnny, O John,
O Johnny Appleseed:
see how the creatures' orchards
heavy hang . . .

White flesh, white flesh,
red skin and skin of yellow,
crisp air, keen air, October sun,
the summer's sweetness at the core:
unplucked, unknown,
the woodland trees alone,
wild crab, sweet crab—
all wild fruit
by birds and squirrels
planted since:

heavy, heavy hangs each limb,
heavy bends each tree . . .
How many small wild eyes
the planting knew!
Old man, bent man,
man bent with apple seeds,
gray man, old man,
man old with planting apple trees,
young trees . . .

You wild,
squirrel and bird,
you chirpers:
fill pouch and cheek
for Johnny, Johnny Appleseed.

2 NOVEMBER: I went this evening to Bachhubers', where the maid was entertaining two of her friends, likewise maids in the village. Since Effie was picking away at the typewriter, and Harold was busy in the office, I sat among the maids and led them to talk presently of the things their forbears held for truth, and so learned many a belief and superstition new to me.

"If you start work on Friday," said Madelyn, "it won't turn out well. Or if you cut the ends of your hair at new moon, it'll get heavy." Later she added: "Six months from spring's first thunder, there'll be frost." Leona contributed: "If thaw comes in December, it's going to thaw every month. If you touch toads you get warts; but if you go out and rub the wart with a stone, put the stone in a bag and throw it away, the person who picks it up will get your wart." Orinda said:

"When the cats eat grass, it will rain. When a rooster crows before the door, or a cat washes its face before the door, you'll have company."

Effie was much amused at this, and the girls seemed also amused, though it was patent that they more than half believed these things themselves. Since all three come from farms and have been brought up hearing these beliefs all their lives, it is not strange that they should give credence to them, even in the face of ridicule. Certainly they are no worse than the villager who shies away from walking beneath a ladder or suffers some trepidation at sight of a black cat crossing his path or treasures four-leafed clovers even as he avoids those with five leaves.

3 NOVEMBER: I pursued my inquiry into native superstitions a little farther this morning by sitting for a while with grandmother Volk and great-aunt Lou. I narrated some of the beliefs heard the previous evening in the hope of hearing others. Grandmother responded at once. If the clock stops, she said, someone will die in the house, and if you kill a cricket or a spider or a toad, it will rain or you will have bad luck. But great-aunt Lou told the best one: "To get rid of a wart, tie a silk thread into a knot around it, then take it off and lay it behind the hog trough; when it rots, your wart will be gone." Great-aunt firmly believed this one; grandmother was not so sure, holding tight only to her belief in dreams.

9 NOVEMBER: From Minneapolis today aunt Virginia brought down an old, worn leather book from great-aunt Margaret's possessions. It turned out to be great-grandfather

Derleth's *Wanderbuch,* and contained in it a certificate of naturalization dated 16 September, 1845, which indicated that he had been in the United States since 1839, approximately ten years earlier than any of us had supposed. There appears in the book, too, from time to time, a variant spelling: Derlath: but this seems always to have been a clerical error, for he himself was apparently always careful about his spelling.

The *Wanderbuch* was issued to a locksmith, though in one place an amusing error was made in that a scribe wrote *jailer* or *lock-keeper.* Michael or Michel Derleth is described as having been born in Zinl, Bavaria, in 1812, and his stature is given as *vor mittler;* his face: *lenglich;* his nose: *stumpf;* his eyes and hair: *braun;* and as for distinguishing marks, he was without them. He set forth on his apprenticeship on the second of April, 1832, guided by a set of severe rules, upon translating which, Father Forester was reminded of a tale his father told *circa* this period about the strictness of German laws separating the classes which required his father, though a Swiss, to salute a German postmaster, making him very indignant.

Great-grandfather traveled from place to place: Erlangen, Vorscheim, Nürnberg, Eistadt, Kussnacht, Linz, Bamberg, Ansbach, Augsburg, München, Passau, and others, but he was apparently not content with his living, and on the fourteenth of June, 1839, he set out for America, a trip which he began to chronicle carefully as *Die Reise auf dem Wasser,* but of narrating which he soon tired, since he recorded only his journey to a place where they could take a steamship (Hamburg), their long waiting, storms and winds on the

sea, the crossing of the English Channel, and again winds and storms, after which he ceased to write.

He put down a painstaking account of things bought for his life in the new world: table, three chairs, bedstead, stove, cooking dishes, broom, basket, irons, pan, and some materials for his craft, which had broadened to silversmithing and goldsmithing. After this, he used his *Wanderbuch* to keep a record of his employment in Pennsylvania, where he spent a few years before coming to Wisconsin, and he made a list, which surely tried him sorely, of his attempts to learn English and its pronunciation. Down one page he wrote laboriously:

won	*einz*
tu	*zwei*
tri	*drei*
for	*vier*
feif	*fünf*
eht	*acht*
tin	*zehn*
twälf	*zwölf*
hundret	*hundert*
tousent	*tausend*

And he put down on the overpage some of the commonest nouns he must use:

prät	*Brod*
woater	*Wasser*
pork	*Rindsfleisch*
cabätsch	*Kraut*
hät	*Hut*
schus	*Schuh*

He kept a very careful account, for all that it remained difficult to read, including a sheet of penciled recipes, all common in Wisconsin decades ago, among them one for *Dampf-nudeln*, and a curious note: "Received May 18, 1844 of Mr. Michael Derllett Six dollars and twenty-three cents in full of a Judgment with costs included in favor of Francis Wiesman: Jno. Laws: $6.23," with which Mr. Wiesman great-grandfather continued affably enough to do business until 1850, when his assets amounted to "two hundred thirty-eight dollars saved," and he went west to Wisconsin.

21 NOVEMBER: I learned this morning that Mrs. Matt Mettel, a pleasant old lady lingering in a hopeless illness, had vanished from her home. Myself much distressed, since I often passed the time of day with her on my way to the marshes: a kindly, handsome old lady, always ready to smile. I heard subsequently that she had risen and dressed herself and gone into the kitchen of her home to talk a little with one of her daughters and her nurse. She had seemed pleasant and normal enough, and when, after a little while, she apparently returned to her room, she had seemed in good spirits. But five minutes later she was not there; an immediate search disclosed her coat not far from the house, near the railroad bridge. Presumably she had leaped into the cold water where the current flows deepest beside the bridgehead along the west bank. An arteriosclerotic condition had caused her to have some mental lapses, which she realized; she was driven, too, by a groundless fear of being "taken away," the same fear which had troubled grandmother Derleth too for a year or so; of late, she had talked increasingly of the river as a way of escape. She was watched care-

fully, but somehow managed to elude everyone this morning.

Hugh and I went down and saw people clustered about the bridge, as always people gather when any untoward event occurs to disturb the even keel of village life. Boats were on the river, and men dragging the Wisconsin. The sky was bleak and wintry, ice lined the river's shores, and a cold wind blew, lending to the somber occupation of the silent men on the river a singular melancholy. We walked across the bridge, across Bergen's Island, and the farther bridge to the Spring Slough, where we turned to face the west wind and come back. More boats were out now, and some of the earlier seekers were returning, pulling slowly up against the current, having found no trace of her.

22 NOVEMBER: Mrs. Mettel was found early this morning, resting against a stump in the channel half a mile down, where the current swings over to the shore of Bergen's Island, at approximately the place where Alton Halder in *Still Is the Summer Night* paused to watch the *Sarsey Ann* come upriver. One arm was tight against her body, and a house slipper was held there under her arm; this would seem to indicate that the uncertain heart had given way at the shock of striking the cold water. Her determination to die had brought about her end; what dark agony had brought her to this determination only she could know. I reflected, as often before, how little we can know of human motives, how very little!

30 NOVEMBER: While idling near Josephine Merk and Thekla Naffz this afternoon on Water Street, Miss Ilsa Lah-

man passed: she who has always had delusions of grandeur and has a habit of referring to a dubious relative too distant for placing on a family tree as "our cousin, Count ——," walking in her characteristic fashion, as if on eggshells, with the appearance of a slight limp: a hitch, actually.

"What ails Ilsa?" asked Thekla wonderingly, gazing after her.

"Why, nothing," replied Jo.

"But she limps!"

Jo laughed. "Oh, that!" she said, with a twinkle in her eye. "She got that walking up and down the stairs in her medieval air castles."

1 DECEMBER: Karl Ganzlin told me this evening that in one of his English classes a pupil had risen and given five essential rules of speech with precision, but for the sixth had very gravely said: "Always watch your posterior." This put me in mind of Katherine Wander, well known for her howlers in and out of school. "Frankfort was famous for the Congress of Vienna, which was held there," for instance. She had the habit of always repeating her errors, and sticking to them with the tenacity of one who knows she is wrong but will have the point nonetheless. I thought of her because one morning not long ago she told me about the way in which poison ivy affected her—"As I walked there by the fence, all of a sudden I felt all come over, and there I looked and saw all the poison ivy on the fence, and the next day I had it. All over. I got it just coming near it, on the wind, as if."

15 DECEMBER: Because I wanted to know something about hats, I went today to Upper Sac Prairie and called on the old milliner, Mrs. Gasser-Moore, who has a collection of hats equaled by few museums in the entire Midwest. A gnomelike old woman, gnarled, with bright dark eyes, she has worked in her store for fifty-four years, and has acquired much the flavor of a succulent nut. She was glad to see me. "I used to teach your aunt Virginia, Mrs. Ferber that is," she said. "She came up every day and sewed hats; she learned how to make them from me."

One by one she took the old hats out of their boxes, the cases, off her shelves, and showed them to me, explaining patiently with what manner of clothes they were worn, their period, and how she had made them. "When I began making hats, people didn't buy many hats; the women just bought the frames. Sometimes they fixed them up themselves, but mostly they had the decorations put on by me and my girls—the apprentices," she added with dignity.

After a while she forgot the hats and talked a little about herself. Her ambition now, she said, was to round out sixty years in business, sixty years in this same little store on Water Street. She told me at some length about her first years at work, about her parents and her home. She quoted her father very often. "Father always said—" or "Father believed—" She has already outlived two husbands, but is not nearly as proud of her own ability to keep up as she is of the fact that she "never failed to meet my obligations, and that is the secret of success." Now, despite the fact that so much of Sac Prairie's shopping is done in near-by Madison, her indomitable will keeps her in business. She celebrates each season in hats as she did fifty years ago, and she says

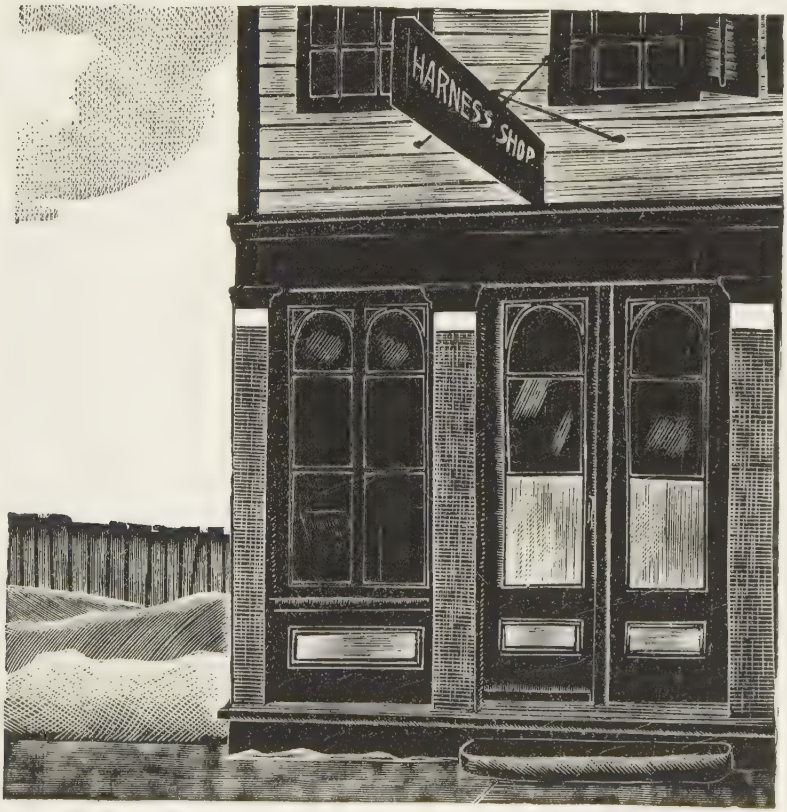
she means to keep on doing so. Her dark eyes snap and flash, but she is humble, she gives whatever credit she may merit to the memory of her father and to God.

"When my second husband died, I sat at the window in the early morning, and I looked out, and I asked myself: 'Are you going to make it?' Now I ask myself that every morning, and I know I am." She smiled, straightened her bent body a little, and looked up at me. "I'm old and gray and wrinkled and skinny, but I like my work."

17 DECEMBER: The early wintry days of late autumn begin the old harness-shop season; for three months now Hugh and his father—long ago in early boyhood days dubbed Eli, or Alias the Night Wind—will be busy oiling and repairing harnesses for farmers, whose ceaseless work on the land severe weather and heavy snows bring to a brief respite. Though it stands on Water Street, surrounded by neon signs and modern fronts (most of them a bastard Venetian with German behinds), the old harness shop continues to hold about it a mellow atmosphere of time past, with its shuttered front, its numerous small sheds adjoining the building in the rear, the open stairway up the north wall to the second story, where lived until recently Long John, the Sage of Water Street, and where now Nick holds forth, repairing all kinds of gadgets, at which he is dexterous, and in the dusk playing his fiddle.

Inside, it is mellow with age, redolent with the smell of old leather, wax, and oils. The walls are decorated with calendars from many a year, their pleasant colorful old pictures quaint today and yet not a far cry from the shop's own calendars on the counter near the door, as always at this time

of the year. Higher on the walls, hooks hold stoutly made harnesses; Eli (whose name is really, prosaically Bill) made most of them, and now Hugh, too, helps to make them.



Here and there are factory products, but these can never bear too close a scrutiny beside the immeasurably superior handworked harnesses. The first few of the season's repaired and oiled harnesses hang from long rows of hooks in the ceiling beyond the old stoves, and behind them, the newly

red-painted hames are strung up to dry. Constantly in this season Hugh and Eli are at work along the crude but efficient workbench under the window on the north wall, or at the secondary "leather" workbench along the south wall, where no window is, and green-shaded globes must furnish light by which to work. From the north bench, Hugh can look out up the aging shingled roof of the little red-brick Fuchs house, almost upon the shop, with room only for a single passageway between at one place, past the rooftop to the Lachmund house gable and the old elms against the winter's blue sky.

I sat for a while this afternoon on the broad stepladder near the old cabinet against the south wall, and had not been there long when a farmer came in. Hugh was alone at the moment, and gave him his attention. The farmer was wearing a heavy fur coat, despite the weather's mildness, and had a strange "toothless" way of talking. He began to complain as soon as he opened his mouth. He complained about the weather; first it was too cold, then it was too warm. He had been up in the woods sawing timber, and the weather had made this difficult. Moreover, he had more reasons for not accomplishing much. He had had a mighty bad week. The trouble began with his hired man. To hear him talk, you felt that the hired man was always to be found where there was no work. The hired man never got any work done because he ran away from it, and his employer failed to accomplish anything in turn because he ran after him. He stood gobbling excitedly, flinging his arms around with helpless and futile gestures, his face reddening. On Monday, he said, the hired man had got drunk on the job; on Tuesday he had got drunk again and fallen into the river; it took him

all day Wednesday to thaw out. But this was only the beginning of his tale of woe. On Tuesday afternoon his uncle had slipped on the streets of Sac Prairie, broken a rib or two, and now lay in the hospital. On Wednesday afternoon his daughter had eloped with a young man only a few steps ahead of the sheriff. It was incredible, this narrative of toil and trouble, but it went on endlessly until no one listened but me, and I soaked it in out of a shameless conviction that the man was potential material. Hugh pronounced his epitaph when at last he went out: "There goes the best example yet of the successless farmer."

18 DECEMBER: The bench warmers in the post office today speculated about the necessity of whisky to a man's diet. Old Menges, who can hardly talk for the way he rolls his words about in his mouth and half swallows them, told a story about someone he knew who was warned not to drink any more whisky and did anyway, only to live just as long in spite of it. This perfectly pointless old saw was given back to Menges in the same coin by his listeners, one by one, each mightily satisfied with himself. Old Menges sat nodding his head, his rheumy eyes half closed, his mouth half open, plainly disbelieving them. When they had finished, he began stolidly over again.

19 DECEMBER: Riding back to Sac Prairie from Madison this evening under the moon's first quarter and Venus bright in the west, I was surprised to learn that many farmers still use lamplight and lanterns, their yellow light warm and intimate—a lamp on table like a bright chrome star, and windows outlined in yellow in the dark bulk of houses, shapeless in the dusk: a lantern swung along or standing alone in

open barn doors, lanternglow in a still pool all around. In the wan moonlight the country, with still a little snow left on high ridges despite the days of thaw, was strange, only half-real; there was no mist, but a kind of iridescence, a reflection and distortion of light by snow and dark fields, trees and out-buildings, hills and fields and slopes, where groves were dark and where sometimes red coals glowed in the wake of brush-burnings. There is an old, long-known magic about the countryside at night, all the more intimately mysterious for swift passage through it: lamplight, dark houses, hills, and, far across fields and valleys, the faint yellow points of light in distant farmhouses, which bring wonder about what lives pass there, what unknown tragedies and joys are theirs—the fundamental mystery of life orbits touching briefly upon each other and swinging away again. Seeing a farmer coming in from his fields by lanternlight, I jotted down *Lantern and Man.*

Lantern and man come down along
the pasture line, man shadow after:
fence post and pasture gate march past,
but always man is last.

Lantern and man now coming fast:
owl sound, loon laughter
with darkness closing down—
down from the ridge swift for his house,
as in his field his fellow creatures:
snake, shrew, mouse . . .

Man and his little pool of yellow light
alone against the night.

20 DECEMBER: This afternoon Hugh and I went down the east shore of Bergen's Island, despite a sharp, raw northeast wind blowing a gale. The sun was out, the sky cloudless, and in the sheltered way between Bergen's and the small island we have named the Channel Cat, somnolence and warmth prevailed. The willows were mustard in color, the sand was bare of snow along the trees leaning over from the greater island's bank, clinging leaves a deep leathery brown, and sunlight gleaming on the slender branches of a towering birch. Among the tall underbrush on Bergen's, bittersweet was still a brilliant orange and red, wahoo or spindle-tree berries crimson and cerise; a little fruit had fallen to the birds; almost all the black alder berries were gone, but those remaining were doubly bright for the dark-colored prickly ash and elm all around.

We crossed the ice-covered east channel of the Wisconsin to the brook's mouth, and from there went leisurely along the Lower Meadow to the haystacks, marking the thickening buds of maple and birch hanging with delicate tracery upon the sky at the meadow's north edge. We sat for a while in the lee of the wind against the haystacks, taking the sun's warmth before it swung southwestward and away, and, while sitting there, were witness to one of those country comedies occasionally come upon.

The stage consisted of the meadow before us, the bogs, and the railroad embankment to eastward, and the first actors were a hunter and his dog. The hunter went casually along the embankment, the dog ahead, turning every little while to watch for his master, who seemed exceedingly inept. It was presently apparent that he was strange to his territory. Two more actors came upon the scene, two hunters

to join the first, and the three surrounded and set about beating a small triangle of the marsh just west of the Mid-Meadow Slough, and thus almost directly east of us. Their chosen territory was as devoid of huntable animal life as a trackless waste. However, hope springing eternal, they began to go down through the treacherous bogland. But not before some business with their dog, as follows: hunter pets dog; talks to dog; dog bored, sits down; both rest a little, in course of which the hunter sees Hugh and me and is astonished enough to assume the approved sportsman's pose *à la Esquire* (unfortunately not dressed *à la Esquire*). The result was amusing, especially after the natural laxity and carelessness which preceded it. The third hunter descended at last to the marsh, but the dog would not budge from the railroad tracks. Hugh and I watched expectantly. The first hunter stalked through the bogland as if on egg shells. The second dared the ice among the hummocks and presently went down, as Hugh and I had expected. He seemed surprised and indignant; he pulled himself out hastily and tried to be indifferent, but could not resist looking ruefully down at his legs from time to time as if unable to believe that he had got them wet. Almost immediately after this brief action, the leading hunter went into a hidden pond deeply enough and with enough suddenness to splash water gleaming into the sun well above his waist. This resulted in a hasty retreat of all three to the embankment. The dog, who had discreetly stayed on the tracks all the time, wagged his tail happily; so we assumed that the audience had unanimously enjoyed the program.

We left the haystacks presently, crossed the brook, and went on up the embankment to the east channel trestle,

where we descended and walked north to the highway bridge. Berries of nightshade and of the carrion vine gleamed blackly along the way, set off by the deep maroon of the alder buds, shining in the sunlight, and the attractive seeds of the climbing false buckwheat: tan-brown pods with crisp wings hung in clusters wound around stalks of weeds and bushes. In the Trautman woods, Hugh paused to examine man tracks, demonstrating his deductive power to show why he knew the walker wore leggings: by the rib in mid-track.

23 DECEMBER: A farmer driving a truck had an accident today, where the railroad crosses Highway Sixty in the village. Coming out of town, he heard the train whistle and naturally looked up the track, expecting to see it leaving Sac Prairie, forgetting that today was stock day and the train was scheduled for later arrival; failing to see it, he stepped on the gas, but, glancing momentarily to his left, he saw to his horror that the train was bearing down upon him. He swerved frantically, but his right front fender smashed up against the train and grazed it. As I came up the tracks this afternoon with Clifford, the truck had just finished unloading its hogs into another come to remove the stock from the smashed truck so that it could be taken back to a garage by a wrecker, though there was nothing greatly damaged on the truck. But alas! the poor old train, fondly known as, variously, the peanut grinder and the coffee grinder, had lost a heavy castor and some stout boards, and seemed generally to have got by far the worst of the encounter. Almost precisely the same thing happened a few years ago, when another farmer, driving a rickety

Ford, struck the train in passing, and took off the entire rear platform and steps with a great clatter and bang, while he drove on blissfully unaware that anything notable had taken place.

24 DECEMBER: This evening, as is our invariable custom, Hugh and I went to the Reformed Church for the Christmas program, which, though never notable for the performers, is always memorable for the performance. The minister tonight seemed a little grim, as if too sharply aware that almost half the scheduled performers were at home, "sick." The program included the usual number of pants-hitcher-uppers, skirt-lifters, handkerchief-twisters, hand-wringers, children large-eyed with fright and their opposites, those abounding with aggressive confidence. As usual, the parents were amusing, most of them with eyes only for their own children, almost openly disapproving all others without actually realizing their reactions. The prize exhibit of this evening was Zap, or Zappy, a young man who can best be called "a usual usher," overcome tonight with the conviction of his own great importance. He must be seen to be fully appreciated in his antics: the long, gaunt length of him attired in somber brown, with almost flamboyantly orange shoes and gray spats, draped over a chair balanced on its hind legs, his own legs crossed, and one arm brought negligently around one end of the chair's back. His face was like a turkey's, flushed with self-importance, his chin confidently firm, his spectacles precisely set, and his already thinning hair combed and oiled. He rose every three or four minutes to examine the doors, regardless of what he interrupted or whose attention he distracted, and subsequently settled him-

self with a little flurry, like a rooster after having duly crowed. A creak in the hall brought him like a shot out of his chair; he opened the door and went out, one gaunt, bony hand clasping the open door. Presently he came back in, followed by the unfortunate latecomer, who made only a tenth as much disturbance as Zappy did. At the collection, finally, he managed to focus attention upon himself in a way less desirable: he dropped the collection plate, and thereupon took part in a mad scramble for silver. Great excitement prevailed while the minister made some prayers for peace, and Hugh and I slipped out, after having duly deposited our contribution.

26 DECEMBER: This evening went for a little while to Dick Kuoni's to help celebrate his birthday, and while there was regaled with tales from the past, fifty years and more ago. Somehow, we began to talk about fires, and I heard again how the badly rattled firemen on one memorable occasion carried a feather bed tenderly downstairs and threw a washbasket full of dishes from an upstairs window. Tonight, however, heard of less familiar conflagrations. The Lenz fire—how Willi Lenz ran barefooted to ring the firebell through bitter cold and snow, his voice hoarse with fear and grief, his brewery and dwelling already a mass of flames; how the firefighting equipment was inadequate, though close to the river, where a hole was made in the thick ice but fragments of ice clogged the nozzle of the fire hose and made it useless. Bucket brigades failed to stem the fire. In the Park Hall that evening, the lecturer had just issued a stentorian call for *Mehr Licht,* when the fire burst redly into the sky. The Truckenbrodt fire, which so lit up the sky

that it was briefly thought the river itself was aflame. The Blumberg fire: how plate glass was blown out by the force of the hose upon the head of an intoxicated citizen curious to know how firefighting was conducted.

Everyone talked at once, as customary, and Minnie Truckenbrodt with great animation told about her father, as fire chief in the old days, unable to find his trousers and thereafter demanding that a dim light be kept burning at night, and how Sal, after his death, deciding that the light was needless, had put it out, and subsequently while asleep one night startled everyone by calling for the missing light.

What has always seemed to me most notable about these little gatherings is not, however, the wealth of information that flows there, but their warmth and friendliness. The party did not break up until after midnight.

27 DECEMBER: On the way home this evening I saw two rabbits in the park, unconcerned and unafraid, and it occurred to me again how much wild life exists within the limits of the village quite apart from the partially wild make-up of the approximately twenty-five hundred souls occupying houses great and small.

29 DECEMBER: Merks have the most attractive Christmas tree of any I have seen, beautiful because of its simplicity and its quietly lovely natural color. In this it is akin to their flower bouquets, which are invariably arranged to simulate a natural growth. The tree was a stout branch of alder, upon which a few slivers of tinsel had been hung; it was set in a brown vase, so that the brown, the silver tinsel, and the maroon of the graceful fingerbuds stood out far more than

a pine or cedar made gaudy with tinsel and baubles. I could not help reflecting that it is a pity so few people make use of such natural resources to create things of beauty; certainly too few people know how attractive a room can be with some branches or even seeds in season, thinking only of flowers or, at best, of bittersweet and pussywillows, and quite unaware of poplar or cottonwood catkins, hazel and alder buds and blossoms, of wahoo, belladonna berries, carrion vine, and wild wisteria with milkweed pods and cattails set next to climbing false buckwheat pods. But perhaps this is just as well, for the woods are invaded far too much in the bittersweet's brief season alone by amateurs whose carelessness puts them not very far from the status of vandals.

30 DECEMBER: Extraordinarily mild temperature prevailed today, fifty-four degrees above zero, unprecedented even in the memory of the oldsters in the post office. I went over to the harness shop and sat for a while to wait for Hugh to finish with work, so that we could set out on a hike and properly celebrate the clement weather.

During the short while of waiting, an ointment salesman came in, very jovial, and wanted to put a sticker on the window to advertise his product, a gay but semimodest paper. "They cost twelve and a half cents apiece," he said, "but we'll give you one for nothing." Hugh wondered whether he and his company expected the retailer to pay for the privilege of using the company's advertising to clutter up window space. The salesman, however, considered the bestowal of his sticker a magnanimous act and, moreover, was quite willing at once to put it up, his eye already

squarely on the most prominent pane of the door. Yes, he could put it up, said Eli; so out he went for his materials—a jar of water, a sponge, and a small roller and, coming back, proceeded forthwith to apply the water and make for the door, only to be stopped by Eli, who had been watching him all the while, and directed him to a less prominent pane. The salesman's face fell; he was reluctant to surrender the spot he had chosen, but he had no alternative. In a moment he brightened up again, and convinced himself of the advantages offered by the sticker's new location. He applied himself to his task, making quite a business of it, and obviously in some haste to affix the sticker before Eli changed his mind. Finally it was there, the jar of water was sealed again, and the salesman was ready to be off, not before making some small talk, and assuring Eli that his product would be far better this year, "with better conditions, maybe boom conditions." After he had taken his leave, Hugh noticed that the trade name of his product was misspelled on the sticker.

In early afternoon, Hugh and I set out for the marshes. Since it had rained most of the morning, a warm April-like rain, the day was more like April than winter; the smell of dead, wet leaves was very strong, almost like the distillation of spring or autumn, though at the river rose the heavy smell of exposed banks and thawing ice. In the marshes and meadows the trees were brighter in color, for rain, damp air, and sun made the gray maple and prickly ash stronger to the eye, the osier's red more vivid, the willows' mustard deeper. Lichen along wet boles was far greener than ever it had seemed in the vernal seasons, partly because of the refreshing wash of the rain.

The south wind met us at the Spring Slough, and the sun was beautiful among clouds that rayed out into the wind from the southwest. A mallard hen startled up from the sedge along the brook, which was high, rains and thaw having made it so. The mild weather had caused the watercress to become green, so that the color of early spring lay in the clear cold water flowing swiftly, intimately to the Wisconsin, scarce a half mile to westward. Along the brook-bank, too, the pussywillows had begun to dare the winter, here and there with sheaths split, and gray-white catkins pushed forth. Far in the north, the clouds had gone down the sky in a dark mass, so that the northeast hills were light against them, and the birch trees and gulls that flew there bright as new-fallen snow, and beautiful with a strange, solitary beauty stronger for its briefness. And in the southwest, the Lower Meadow lay brown and sienna, and sometimes of a honey color, with the sunlight upon it, struck through the leather-brown leaves of an oak grove, from its aura of soft yellow clouds encircling it all around and fanning into the upper sky, so that meadow, trees, and sky were warm to the sight, in contrast to the cold hills and dark clouds in the north.

We crossed to the Mazomanie road through the lowland opposite the Triangle, over the pasture gate, and had only begun to go up the road when we were caught in a sudden shower, driven against us by the rising wind, all because we had failed to interpret correctly the change of color from deep blue to dusty brown against the distant ridge below Wisconsin Heights in the south, both of us thinking it the difference made by cloud-shadow instead of by advancing rain. The Heights were shrouded in a beautiful, golden haze,

a downpour of rain shot through with brief sunlight, so that it seemed as if a cloud of radiance had come to life there against the Heights, rising dimly dark into the southern sky beyond, an iridescence so bright that it cast faint shadows before us. We sought shelter behind the two-hundred-year-old elm along the road before Lenson's farm house, and there we stayed until the shower had passed, and we could go on, walking now along the road, marking the sunlight gleaming upon the rails we had quitted, upon alders and willows along the embankment and the meadows, and seeing thousands upon thousands of reeds, grasses, and weeds glittering and gleaming wetly in the sun, and all in motion in the tumultuous, almost boisterous wind, the whole expanse of the meadows like a carpet of gold alive in the sunlight. The atmosphere of April crystallized: warm wind and rain, sudden shower, fleeting, wind-driven clouds, pools in the road blue with sky, brown with cloud, white with fleeces racing before the wind.

31 DECEMBER: Midnight, and the year done. Effie had just said that she relinquished each passing year with sadness, and advanced with trepidation upon the new, conscious of treading upon strange ground, unknown time, for fear of what this year will bring, and I thought perhaps that trouble and trials she had known had brought her to this, for I myself am satisfied with each year, glad to move on to another, knowing how much has been left undone, how little done, how poorly or well things have happened, and unafraid of years' weight. The bells rang out, the Roxbury bells, wild and clear and joyous on the night wind, and they rang still when I went home, pausing a little among the dark

trees in the park, where I could see Orion high in the sky, monarch of winter's sky, bright Sirius, and the Twins beyond. I listened to the bells in the clear cold night, remembering the passing of other years, and I thought how quiet and still, with only the sound of bells, and how peaceful, and what beauty is in peace alone!

2 JANUARY: This morning, snow fell, heavy and wet, over six inches of it on the level. All morning it continued, sometimes flakes in small clouds, flurried a little by chance wind, and the flakes very large: many of them three inches in diameter. The fall diminished slowly throughout the afternoon. In the evening Hugh and I walked to Upper Sac Prairie along the back street: Willow Street here, though it is Madison Street from the grain elevator to the creamery. The skyline was dark as jet, though the upper sky was lighter because of the reflection of village lights upon the low-hanging clouds. At the line of earth and sky, two solitary lights shone, yellow and far, like stars, and I was taken again by the feeling of loneliness, a kind of sadness that always strikes into me when I see these far lights shining steadily and alone far out on the prairie, because they seem to symbolize a certain mystery of earth and the living upon

it. Because I do not know who lives there, and have no wish to know, they stand for the fundamental mystery I apprehend in every life, in every dwelling around me all the time, the knowledge that attempts to understand lives and their motives are too often folly, for the complexity of one laid bare is no key to all the others, and we are all crying in a wilderness.

We came back down to Lower Sac Prairie along the river, where, across the Wisconsin, Sugar Loaf and the Northeast Hills rose light with snow against the dark sky beyond black water, and at the foot of the hills a cluster of lights gleamed in the few houses there, while midway up, deep in the hills, the light at Kehl's shone like a solitary yellow star.

In midevening, I called at Kahns', where I sat for some time being entertained by anecdotes about Tom Bardshaw, now a minor village official, especially about his seeming fear of assuming either physical or moral responsibility for anything: as a truck-driver, wishing to have his truck overhauled, oiled, and greased by someone else; as a factory worker, seeking to give orders and command without the onus of working himself, and the avoidance of any menial task; as a road commissioner, preferring to drive his truck and let his underlings work, always ready with a thousand small excuses—as for oiling his truck: "I might miss a few holes"; for driving constantly instead of assisting at more difficult labor: "It saves time if one of us drives right along"; and so on. Only today I saw him driving about with a snowplow attached to the truck, bawling orders to his single helper and creating as much disturbance as plow and truck

together, but that small wonder, for the plow was fixed too high to be of much service. And I remembered how one cold autumn day I saw him complacently seated in the truck, well out of the wind, allowing a far older man and another helper to pitch leaves, while he remained snug and comfortable on the plea that he was "saving time," so patently a work dodger's excuse that I could not help wondering what misguided intention could have accounted for the Village Board's appointing him to his position. Sitting there listening to Al add small details to my own store of information about Tom, I began to recall from the recesses of memory how grandfather Derleth once said to me: "Take care whom you trust. Watch how, when Tom wishes to speak to anyone, he cautiously beckons him, and then looks carefully around to see whether he is well out of earshot before ducking his head to talk in a confidential whisper. That's the indisputable way of a man who has neither the power nor the courage of his convictions, and it's entirely probable that his cowardice is founded upon self-interest and deceit." Certainly that might well be Tom Bardshaw's epitaph.

4 JANUARY: Apropos the above Tom Bardshaw, Mrs. Carliner, watching him relate anecdotes from the shovel upon which he leaned while his helpers were removing snow from Water Street, observed that the Village Board "might as well have gone the whole way and cushioned his shovel handle with thick rubber pads."

5 JANUARY: Despite slippery sidewalks, this evening I met, coming from the post office with the *Times*, old Barney Merkel striding steadily along. He carried a gnarled old cane

and made a magnificent figure of a man: tall and straight, with an upright walk, a challenging eye, a flowing white beard. And he ninety-two. I bade him good evening, and he looked at me smartly, almost visibly pigeonholing me as old August Derleth's grandson. I was reminded of his daughter's telling me how he was restless and ill-at-ease when not at work during the day. He kept a large piece under cultivation, putting in potatoes, corn, tomatoes every year. One day in the spring, said Clara, she had returned to find him gone, and, not knowing but that he had fallen somewhere in the bottoms of First or Second Island, where he walks occasionally, she became alarmed and thought to look for him, but before setting out, saw him coming up the street, carrying his spade and his rake. He had come from the cemetery, more than a mile away. He said reflectively that he had spent the afternoon cleaning up his wife's grave; it had occurred to him that there was some work there he could do; so he went, regardless of hot sun and sultry air, age and distance. Passing him, I remembered these things, and thought of his following the way that pleased him most as unobtrusively as possible, unlike other old men who often assume a harmless arrogance, as if to point out that, having reached an advanced age, they are now entitled to an even greater consideration than ever before, regardless of lack of achievement, and in this regard are like children who enjoy being fussed about and come to learn little ways of drawing attention to themselves should they fail to receive it naturally. But not so Barney. He strode away into the wind as I should imagine one of the village's ancient elms might go if it could.

6 JANUARY: I saw today from my typewriter how Mrs. Jorges toiled up and down the back-porch steps of her home, with what obvious effort and pain, and thought with admiration of her will to live in the face of knowing that she is dying as surely as can be of the cancer that has taken possession of her body. But give up she will not, not even in the face of the most excruciating pain. She is needed in her household, where her aged father still lives; though her children are grown and married, she still has work to do, and will do it until her weakened body refuses any longer to act, which is a sad commentary upon those men and women who take to bed at the first sign of illness, no matter how trivial. Every Sunday she goes to church, and if she knows any pain there, no sign of it appears on her white face; after services she takes off her black coat and changes to her house dress, puts on a gray sweater, and takes up her daily routine again.

I have often thought that routine may be a curse, but as often surely it is a blessing, a necessary one, and I think with a little pity of those people who work only because of what they may earn and not for the joy of work itself. I am sometimes asked why Eli works so in the harness shop, since he is presumed to have adequate means to justify his retirement, to which I can only answer by asking what he would do with himself, were he to cease working now? "Enjoy himself," they say. Enjoy himself, indeed! when his joy is in his work—not in what it may bring him but in the sheer pleasure of laboring with his hands, as we are all certainly meant to do in one way or another. But such blindness prevails; these poor sheep measure themselves, their neighbors, and even their simplest pleasures in dollars and cents.

8 JANUARY: This afternoon Tom Bardshaw ventured into Water Street with his snowplow and proceeded with great verve and eagerness to undo and "better" the work done by the county highway men, effectively piling snow upon sidewalks and blocking cars in their parking spaces. Tom was very indignant that anyone should object, but it was difficult to determine who was more angry: Bardshaw or the outraged drivers and businessmen. The weight of the argument indubitably belongs to the latter, especially since Bardshaw will certainly not have time today to remove the snow he and his plow so artfully ridged along both sides of the street, thus keeping many a car out in the night's cold unless shovels are wielded more lustily than Bardshaw himself can wield one. For those who were not so luckless as to be victims, Bardshaw's frenetic and pointless work was doubly amusing, particularly since he arrogated to himself all the powers of a czar in a small snow-bound kingdom. I deplored my inability to be at his table this evening and hear him explain the incident to his wife.

11 JANUARY: Pete told me today that old Yarkie, the bartender, used to treat the house to cigars, and, to be sure that the clerk at the cigar counter made no mistake, always waved jovially to him with five fingers spread wide, calling out, "Give 'em all one. Treat the boys!" When two-for-five cigars came in, Yarkie was in a quandary, but presently evolved a feasible plan; he rapped twice to call the clerk's attention, and then gave him the five-spread-fingers wave.

Poor Tom Bardshaw, ordered to shovel away as much as possible of the snowbanks he created so diligently and need-

lessly last Saturday night, came down to work and found the banks well frozen. Realizing his additional difficulties now, he suddenly developed a sore arm, an opportune boon to him. Common hope in the village today is that Bardshaw's underlings might not take too long to clean up his inefficient work, so that Tom would not be overlong put to the inconvenience of his "sore arm."

12 JANUARY: I sat for a while this afternoon in the harness shop with Hugh and Eli. Presently came a farmer for his harnesses, which had been washed and oiled. He balked forthwith at the price: two dollars and fifty cents: and made a very unpleasant face, whereupon Eli good-naturedly listened to his rigmarole of having been given to understand that the price for oiling and washing would be only a dollar, and let him have the harnesses for two dollars. Hugh was much put out at this, and small wonder, for the farmer was well-to-do, and the work represented a goodly time. Hugh said so. "You don't know how much goes into these hogs I have to sell to pay you," said the farmer. To this Eli replied, "You don't know either how much goes into washing a harness."

After the farmer had gone, Eli shook his head a little sadly and said that in time past one heard no such speech as this farmer's; a landsman, having contracted for his calling, observed all its rules and made no attempt to fix opprobrium for his expenses upon others. He went on to say how often farmers brought him a cord of wood in payment for bills, quoting a certain price at striking the bargain, but delivering at a higher price, and often not quite a cord; and when this was pointed out, inevitably agreed. "Guess I could've

put on a few more sticks," they might say; but that was the last heard about it, or done, for that matter. Time was, continued Eli, when the farmer went about his business with grave seriousness, recognizing it for a full-time job; but now all is haste, all is feverish insistence upon becoming rich at once, with a minimum of cost and labor, and too many people altogether now hold that the world owes them riches and life without either their exertion or their care. The augury for democracy is not bright with such as these sapping its juices.

16 JANUARY: The women in the drugstore tonight sat talking about Clara Halgenau, who had just been in: a thin, gawky woman, who looks under-nourished, has a sharp tongue, and is not possessed of much education. She had been in and gone out again, having ordered some things in her peculiar clipped language. I have myself heard her in the butcher shop order, "Ten cents piggie meat," and in the bakery, "Five cents buns"; clipping each word, enunciating almost to painful extremes, thus: buns to *bunts,* cents to *tzents,* and so forth. Erna said she had asked her on one occasion where she bought honey, and had been answered: "For twenty-five cents man comes round."

I have an especial memory of her and her gaunt mother, for the many times I used to hear as child and boy the squeaking and groaning of their coaster-wagon, hauling either a basket of wash or empty, descending upon me in the night. Sometimes as I stood waiting in the shadow of the Park Hall for Margery, I heard them come along and pass, one slightly ahead of the other, drawing the wagon, the other behind, to see that the wash did not fall off, and

the wagon protesting far in advance of their coming and long after their passing, complaining as only long unoiled wheels can complain. Sometimes, sitting alone on the schoolground swings, I heard them come up to the corner and turn, passing twice, therefore, once north of me, and once on the east; sometimes, Margery and I hushed our voices and became silent when the sound of their coming reached our ears. Almost always it was evening when I saw them, so often that I never think of them without the background of afterglow, new moon, and the gentle wind of April or October. Some years ago this month, the taciturn and silent widow Halgenau, coming upon me in the shadow of the bank, myself hatless, as always, shot at me only: "Don't you ever wear a hat?" and caught me too astonished to reply immediately. As a child, I used to walk half in fear of them until I became accustomed to their ghostlike passage, and now the sound of their asthmatic and rheumatic coaster-wagon is an integral part of the sensuous web of adolescence. They have become inextricably bound to the adolescent evenings: to the lovely, lonely time the streetlights came on, with the afterglow still along the western rim, with evening star and early moon, with the halcyon days of first love and all that belongs to that time.

I thought of all this with warmth, remembering at once all the aspects of those evenings, the amethyst, the magenta and copper glow in the sky, the moon and stars, the wind among the trees, the streetlights coming on and swaying a little in the wind; the endless, patient waiting for Margery to come, and the sweet loneliness—against this the sound of the coaster-wagon ceaselessly complaining down the dusk, fading slowly into distance, creaking and groaning, and

Margery's soft voice at last: "They can't hear us now." So closely did all this crowd into the present with all its warmth, the tremulous awareness of those early years, that I had to rise and go out into the night to drive it back and close it away once more into the past.

18 JANUARY: Andy Weber came into the harness shop today and sat for a while near the stove: the great gaunt length of him stretched out there, a heavy cap and coat on. The walk up from the lower mill road, where he lives, had been a sharp one, he said, talking in the way he does, prefacing almost every phrase with his expression: "By gosh all fishhooks!" He said he had had a sore throat—"A cold in my throat!"—but he had cured it. "By gosh all fishhooks! I had me a half pint of whisky, and I drank it—not all at one time—and I ate a box of cough drops, and, by gosh all fishhooks! I got over it in no time at all. Heck, y'know, they always say whisky's good for anything." Unfortunately, his sore throat had come back a little later, "Especially when I smoke," he said. "But I couldn't stop smokin' nohow, and it got cured anyway. Now I ain't takin' no chances, goggone it! I keep my cap and coat on most of the time." A good-natured worker, in his late thirties, he once worked on the railroad as a section man, and still talks about it. Meeting him once on the Spring Slough trestle, Hugh and I had to listen for the third or fourth time to a long, involved, and exclamatory narrative of how he had helped "the boys" fix up the trestle at that place. And at another time along the embankment, he had treated us to a talk on a major enthusiasm of his: the progress of the World Series. Once, hearing me say that I must go home and get to work, he grinned widely; the

prospect of my "working" at writing has never since ceased to amuse him. He is a good, earthy fellow, simple-minded and honest, far better than many other villagers, who live under a veneer of transparently thin culture and conduct themselves tacitly as overlords of man and beast.

25 JANUARY: This morning in the post office I was the unwilling listener to a monologue by Hester Duff, a retired "practical" nurse, on the subject of the disastrous floods along the Ohio and the Mississippi. She said she had sat up until the late hours listening to distress calls on the radio, particularly from Louisville, the city being in darkness. She apparently felt it all very graphically and managed to convey this in her facial expressions, and yet could not conceal a certain excitement in the thought of suffering to be alleviated. Watching her eager eyes, I remembered another time she told how inexpensively she could live, though she is wealthy: "Just a nickel's worth of meat, a handful of vegetables, and lots of water, lots of it, and the soup lasts me three days, sometimes four!" Her eyes twinkle and snap, and her tongue is often unkind and sharp, as if she is aware that there are people who despise her for niggardliness and parsimony. So, perhaps, she is in many ways. But she is unfailingly and unobtrusively kind to the poor.

I sat for a while with Josephine Merk in the library tonight. Helen Hahn and Millie Pohlmann were there, and all of us held forth briefly on the subject of the new library soon to be established in the old Curtis Hotel. I thought of this removal of the library from the Woodman building, once Count Brogmar's home, as the elimination of another tan-

gible clue to the past, and I thought of the scores of afternoons and evenings with Jo, always witty and wise, Jo, with her French lessons, her energy to teach us, her dry, droll comments about the prurient, her good sense of humor, and her quixotic fear that I might read something contaminating to my young mind; I thought of how she urged the young to read, taking unlimited patience with them, and remembered days when I carried home as many as fourteen books, and read them thoroughly and completely in less than a week. The evening was lovely, despite the cold, with the moon seen through the library windows less than a day from fullness, and its bright light dimming the heavens and making the hills across the Wisconsin to shine and gleam from their ice-covered slopes, and the subdued light in ravines to shine forth like the warm glow of hidden lamps, faintly yellow, with all the trees sharply outlined upon the sky in the moon's brilliance. Jo was preoccupied tonight; her fine eyes had less of humor in them, and a little more of trouble. She said nothing, and I did not ask; but of recent months she has not seemed well.

28 JANUARY: I learned this morning that Maud Prentiss had fainted at Kraftz' last night, and frightened them all so that a doctor was called immediately. But she was apparently all right. Yet, after coming around, she thought it best that she be taken home by the doctor. As they were preparing to set out, Miss Rose told feelingly how a dear friend had been stricken similarly in that house some years ago, had gone home feeling well, and had died twenty-four hours later. What the effect of this was upon Maud is not known.

29 JANUARY: In the *Sauk County News* this week, Billy Ynand had a communication:

ONLY A SPRAINED ANKLE

I took a hard fall and sprained an ankle a few days ago. Forty Years ago it would not have stopped me from work or play, but there must be something to the true saying 'three score years and ten.' But more than that. Remember we are bought with a price. Don't doubt it. With the precious blood of the Lamb of God.

Billy Ynand.

Late today old Puli came into the harness shop to buy a piece of leather, "belly-leather" he called it, with which to repair the soles of his shoes. He made quite a business of spending his few cents, causing Eli no end of trouble: fingering the leather and casting many a dubious glance upon it, with down-turned mouth and glum face, his pale reproving eyes turned alternately upon the leather and upon Eli, as if seeking fault in one or the other. But at last he paid for the leather, not without haggling a little about the incredibly low price, and took his departure. "They don't call him Penny-pincher Puli for nothing," said Hugh tartly.

30 JANUARY: This evening came a thunderous assault on the back door while we were at supper, and there stood Frank Hiney, come from his lowlands farm despite all the rain-smoothed ice on the roads, to try to persuade father to come with him and shoe a "mean horse." He said he had been to all the blacksmiths, and none wanted to tackle the horse. Father protested that it was over six years since he

had shoed a horse, or even had the tools in his hands, but Frank insisted that he come, launching into a rambling tale about a pair of mean horses he had once had, horses which had leaped off the bridge into Grell's Creek, so that he had all he could do to keep their heads up and himself free of the water until help came to pull them out. He told that he had taken these ornery horses to be shod, but no one would try it until he went to grandfather Derleth, who said yes, he'd do it, called the boys (father and uncle Charlie), and set to work, while he himself held each horse in its turn, twisting and pulling one around by the tail.

Listening to him talk and enjoying his strange muted accent, I remembered the story of how one Saturday he had found down one of his fences adjoining the railroad right-of-way, and his cattle out, had left it so all day Sunday, and on Monday had stood there to flag down the section crew, to whom he complained plaintively that he had had to stand all day Sunday to guard the fence so that his "kettles couldn't get out," and he could show the cut to the crew, who had broken it.

His pleas did not, however, move father, and at last he took his leave: a small figure, smelling strongly of the farm, well bundled against cold, his pants stuck into grotesquely unwieldy overshoes, looking very much, all told, like Gus Elker, with his thick moustache straggling over his mouth. His eyes twinkle, however, and there are laughter-crinkles about his mouth.

31 JANUARY: Hearing of Frank Hiney's futile invasion of the kitchen last night, Hugh told me that Hiney dearly loves to talk, enjoys nothing better, and occasionally comes to the

harness shop, from which it is almost impossible to dislodge him. On one occasion Frank was there an entire afternoon, constantly in Eli's patient way, and finally, annoyed at having to be on the move all the time, shouted, "God damn it, Eli, you're always in my way!"

3 FEBRUARY: All morning crows passed over town, crying harshly, familiarly, making pleasant music for midwinter. Sometimes there seems to be a difference in their notes at this season, as if to make the signature of spring. They are never over the village so much as in February, when long files of them wing their way from the hills westward over the prairie throughout the morning, and back again in late afternoon. Throughout December and January, the crows seem to prefer the river's shore. Perhaps in this month and next they have an eye for early chickens, for it is seldom until early April that they cease this flight over the village and the prairie valley in the west, and all these mornings now their cawing will drift down from the winter sky.

A three-year-old child was run over on Water Street today but was unhurt, save for a tiny scratch. The child's reaction was extreme indignation. One and all, the villagers say: "If it had been an only child, it would have been killed!" which seems to me evidence of some respect for a malign Supreme Order.

Coming home from town late tonight in a gentle snowfall, I heard the long-drawn, lonely whistle of the train, crying from the bridge near Spring Green: the 11:05 hurtling across country into the southwest; and presently heard the chuffing

and rumbling of the locomotive over the bridge, the sound bell-like in clarity for all this distance: at least fifteen miles as the crow flies. I stood in the silent snow listening to it with the faint nostalgic stirring of unrest deep within me at its distant lonely sound. And, going home, I wrote *In Silent Falling Snow.*

In night's deeps hearing from the bridge below
the Ferry Bluff: the whistle long-drawn-out, slow
but clear through wall of gently falling snow:
the locomotive's voice a lonely child's lost cry,
sound lost in dark and snow-bound winter sky:
in hush of silent trees, in winter dark, heard so
in winter's depth, in winter's heart of falling snow,
this grief-struck, lonely cry low
from the south and ghost-like there
among the whispering flakes in winter air
where dark and secret, fox and hare
wait for the snow to cease, wait for day to dare
the white betrayer:
hearing it, I know
the echo rising deep, the sharp nostalgic homing, know
time past or coming time, the brief, brief hush the
present is: and wait,
and wait—forgetting never, knowing always, always
it is late!

9 FEBRUARY: Outspoken Mrs. Lovell unsmilingly informed her friends this morning of the pregnant condition of a tavern-keeper's wife in this manner: "First he fixed up his tavern's front, and then he fixed up his wife's."

11 FEBRUARY: Barney Merkel stood in the bright sunshine on his Water Street lot this morning preparing to chop wood, his coat off and hung on a nail in the shadow of the little shed far back from the walk, his cap and earflaps pulled down, so that his beard was all the whiter by contrast, and he at the moment shoveling snow and ice away from the chopping block. He seemed as hale and hearty as ever, and unmindful of the cold, still well below the freezing point. The ax he swings is true to the mark.

This afternoon was pleasant in the marshes with the fragrance of the river and the odor of thaw heavy in air, though it was not so evident in the woods, where the jays screamed *Thief! Thief!* at my invasion, and the downy woodpeckers cried out in the still, windless air. Already the chickadees made their spring songs: the familiar three-note cry, *phe-be-be, phe-be,* which made a merry contrast to the *ur-ur-ur* of nuthatches. Brown, dry grass came warmly into the sun at the base of trees facing south, and occasionally the smell of it rose to the embankment. I walked down and watched farmer Hornung haul cut wood from the meadow to the road past the Triangle, and, while standing there, saw a pair of bald eagles soaring over the trees along the east river channel. Passing the time of day with me, farmer Hornung said that February always had nine days of thaw: an old belief I have heard before. He would be hard put to it to defend it, for the past three Februarys have certainly not had nine days of thaw. On the other hand, the sun in this month is usually so warm that it will thaw snow on south sides of trunks, haystacks, buildings, *et al,* even when the temperature is well below freezing.

Coming back, I met two more farmers on Water Street, standing before the post office, and got to talking about the way in which farmers fight for the last cent due them on milk and meat, but seem pathetically ignorant about selling their wood, with the result that loggers strip their wooded slopes and clutter up their cutover land at more cost to farmers than they can realize. It is a little ironic to contemplate the same farmer who cries to high heaven for just prices for his milk, allowing his woodland, his most valuable staple property, to be ruined at so small a profit to him and at so great a future loss, permitting wholesale cutting, with no selective work at all. A pox on farmers' ignorance and another on loggers' cupidity! They are alike, as grandfather would say, in belonging to that unsocial company who think always only in terms of dollars and cents at no matter what harm to fellow men and the good earth.

13 FEBRUARY: Advance copies of *Still Is the Summer Night* having come in some time ago, I put an ear to the ground for comment in the village. Said Father Forester sadly: "Well, August, first we had nothing but murder, and now it's adultery!" "God forbid I write moral tracts!" I countered. The novel is moral enough. Tess Mueller gave it as her opinion that the great attention to detail and the descriptions which impeded the action would prevent the book from becoming a best-seller, which I granted readily enough. Father, meanwhile, is still trying to satisfy himself as to why Scribner's advanced any money at all on it.

16 FEBRUARY: A still, cloudless afternoon in the marshes, where I sat for some time on the first brook trestle; sunlight lay warm, and the air was quiet. The temperature was above freezing, and spring haunted the windless air, which was clear, so that the northeast hills were sharply etched and hazeless. The thaw smell was especially strong this afternoon. Distant sounds of Sac Prairie: voices, cars, hammering, dogs barking, and chickens cackling on Lenson's farm across the small meadow east of the embankment made a pleasant background for the day's somnolence. The brook was silent; only the small, secret sounds of snow settling under thaw, of countless drops of water falling into the brook along its edge were there to fill the stillness. And of birds nothing but the cry of the impatient nuthatch, a far jay, a woodpecker, crow call, and the bright *phe-be-be* of a chickadee. On sheltered banks where the sun shone, snow was gone, and grass lay warmly brown in the wine-yellow sunlight, and the earth was dark. All around, pussywillows had begun to split their brown sheaths for the gray catkins to look through, and pond life was resuming once more, not only of minnows rising, but of underwater insects come from the mud and moving sluggishly about. Farmer Hornung came driving his sleigh into the Lower Meadow, and the sound of his voice rose pleasantly in the distance.

18 FEBRUARY: The *Sauk County News* today seemed exceptionally taken up with various versifyings by the Lord's salt of the earth, ranging in subject from death to congratulatory lines, a few of them at least worth a second reading, as, for instance, this:

"Mr. Johnson took unto himself a wife
With whom he has labored the rest of his life.
Their little church family in Prairie du Sac,
Want to give them a valentine in a nice little pack
But through some hook or crook—no one knows why,
It failed to arrive and we all heaved a sigh."

19 FEBRUARY: I talked for a while tonight to Ida Giegerich and her pleasant old mother about village figures of time past—Judge Quimby, whom Ida remembered as a tall, well-built figure, differing from her mother's opinion that he was not so tall. "But I was a child then, and I suppose he would seem tall to me," said Ida. She brought up Beau Wardler, whom I can remember only as the one-armed mailman who used to meet the evening trains and load his cart in the red glow of the firebox. Before the advent of electric street-lights, said Ida, the village's lamps stood on gaunt posts and were lit by Beau, who existed in Ida's memory of girl-hood as the one-armed man who came along in the dusk carrying ladder and kerosene can, who set up his ladder and mounted the lamppost against the quiet background of afterglow and evening star, trimmed the wick, and lit the lamp. I reflected that it seemed only yesterday that I had heard how he had hanged himself after the Arnold Bond Company's failure, and wondered how he had managed it with but one arm. Sometimes he carried a lantern, said Ida, especially when he came at midnight or earlier to put out the lamps again, so that he could find his way along the dark village streets; he would set it on a fence post, for at that time almost every house and garden were fenced in, and

the yellow glow lit his way down the ladder after he had snuffed the lamps. *Lamplighter*—the name itself is fast fading from use and some day no doubt will have passed beyond memory.

26 FEBRUARY: Otto Rabel was in town today. He had been gone for a long time, over a year, I think. He stood on the steps before the bank, peering myopically up and down the street through his dark glasses, as always, and presently went into a store—to try something on, I have no doubt, spectacles or gloves being his favorites, but never buying. I remember how he used to come into the harness shop and try on gloves, because he "had to chop wood." He has a strange way of biting off his words, chopping them off, and of speaking always in a kind of gasping haste. Whenever anyone offended him, he threatened to "dynamite 'em," or "bomb 'em," though he never harmed a fly. He seemed to be accompanied today, for one or two persons occasionally stopped to speak to him with an air of proprietorship; so perhaps he only visited in Sac Prairie. He still wore the same gray checkered mackinaw, the same cloth cap with earflaps, the same heavy brogans.

3 MARCH: This is Mrs. Gasser-Moore's fifty-fourth anniversary in her millinery shop. Six more to go, she says, and hopes to reach the goal she has set. "I've lasted another winter, and only six more to go. I guess I can make it, all right, if the Lord's willing. Father always used to say: 'Ask the Lord, and He will give if He sees fit.' " Her indomitable spirit is firm as a rock.

4 MARCH: At the Spring Slough trestle today, I heard the year's first killdeer; the cry came twice from the upland slopes beyond Lenson's farm, wildly nostalgic, and a little fretful, as if the bird had been disturbed and were winging down the afternoon crying aloud his pain. But his cry did not come again, though I stood listening for it before I went up on the low Ganser hillslopes to clear snow and ice from a rill's path and make it a small brook, which I then enjoyed damming. From the Upper Meadow came the first harsh croaking of an early frog, the common green frog, and the sound of redwings, unseen, secret somewhere, saluting spring on the south wind rising.

6 MARCH: Walking down from Upper Sac Prairie tonight I caught up with old Mrs. Gasser-Moore on her way home from her hat shop, and modified my hurried stride to her slow steps so that I might walk and talk with her. I congratulated her upon passing her fifty-fourth anniversary in business, and she was delighted to know that I had noticed it. She was full of moral lessons. "Every evening I thank

God that He has let me spend this day at my work, and I ask Him for the morrow," she said. "And in the morning I thank Him for the night. I live a Christian life." Afterward she said she knew that anyone who kept his eyes on his goal and allowed nothing to distract him would succeed. "He can't help it. And I know you will. But be careful to pick a good wife, and soon—one who can cook and sew and *obey.*"

11 MARCH: Some new rapids have formed in the brook just above the trestle, making a cheering sound in the chill air. Where the sun's warmth lay today, an occasional fly or bee buzzed about. Over the Upper Meadow and the Mazomanie road, a pair of ospreys soared and wheeled, diving and flying at each other with studied aimlessness, engaged in one of the love games so common among hawks. I watched them for some time, marking their wonderful beauty on wing, and after they had drifted over the bottoms, over the river to the prairie, thoughtfully put down *Hawk Shadow at Heel.*

Right: left—eyes turned: covering around
from prairie to hill all ground:
now on the wind:
now where the elm is thinned
to budding thickness: now into the west
on the lusty wind's wild breast:
sharp eye now here, now there,
it rides the April air
unchallenged, eye for mouse or hare,
stoat or stone where

serpents take the sun:
wheeling, soaring—never done
with turning:
watching how its talons hold
the wind, do now you think how wingswift death
is windlike and forever cold?

The alder buds had lengthened today, perceptibly, and the gray haze of pussywillows was tangible over the bottoms. I crossed Lenson's meadow by the familiar path to the Mazomanie road and, walking up along the spring-fed sloughs there, smelled the skunk cabbage where apparently someone had crushed the blooms on his way to get watercress. Despite its pungence, it was pleasant.

Two women coming from town stopped briefly to talk. One was Mrs. Walker, whom I have often thought to be *non compos mentis,* the other a stern-faced woman I did not know, though I have seen her before and know that she lives somewhere down the highway. She was possessed of a singular reluctance to smile, which was evidenced in the frozen face she could keep in the face of Mrs. Walker's inconsequential chatter. Mrs. Walker asked me what I had been doing in the bottoms beside the road. "I seen you come up, and I was wonderin', what's he doin' there? I asked." I told her I had been marking the progress of the skunk cabbage. She gaped at me in amazement and said I ought to go up into the hills and see them there, where it would be "less wet," which was appallingly ignorant for a woman who has lived most of her life in these hills not to know that the hillslopes stay wet and muddy longer than the bottoms, and to think that skunk cabbage grew on their sandy

slopes! However, it may be that she has never noticed, and has had other things to think about; or perhaps she has some time seen them in places like Otter Creek where it descends the Baraboo Bluffs through Baxter's Hollow, and assumed that all hills, wet or not, bore skunk cabbage. When I parted from them, it was patent that neither had any very exalted opinion of my intelligence, quite the opposite, and it amused me to feel that this was preferable to respect, because if people think little of me they are not likely to be shy and withdrawn, and I can know them better, I can learn all their little foibles and the bogeys that govern their small lives, and they can be led easily to talk, because people are more likely to talk about themselves to fools, since they need not fear challenge of any kind, and give pleasure to their own ears.

18 MARCH: I was profoundly shocked and grieved today to learn by letter from Howard Wandrei that H. P. Lovecraft had died. This was by chance on the way to the marshes, and I carried H. P. L. with me hour after hour, sharing with the memory of him this Wisconsin landscape he will now never know, though he had hoped some day to know it. Mentor, friend, scholar—all these he was to me and more; he never ceased to encourage, to stimulate, to advise; he was tolerant with every opinion, wise and kind always, and among my correspondents he was the first, and in none of the twelve years since first he wrote did I ever cease to look for his letters with the keenest anticipation. That he should early have seen and correctly prophesied my expanding horizons made him even more secure in my affection. The qualities of mind and spirit that were his, I should be

well pleased to possess. Even though I never knew him personally, his letters helped me to know him as well. I went to the brook trestle and read Howard's letter over, after which, with melancholy reflections, I opened Thoreau's *Spring in Massachusetts,* and came aptly upon this: "The sad memory of departed friends is soon incrusted over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as their monuments are overgrown with moss. Nature doth thus kindly heal every wound."

Tonight I spent some time among H. P. L.'s letters, putting them together, reading them over again, a nostalgic task, preparing to lay them carefully away, for I do not wish to lose them. From time to time my attention was arrested by a line, a paragraph, a pungent observation to comfort, to instruct, to advise. "As to editorial rejection of tales dear to their authors—apparently that is a very frequent type of phenomenon," he wrote in August, 1926. "At this stage of your literary evolution, these prose-poems form an excellent kind of practice for you, permitting you to exercise yourself in atmosphere, colouring, precise rhythms and word-values without the dragging responsibility of a plot," he advised six months later. His opinions were stimulating always. "In history the only important things are sequences and influences. . . . I believe that every creative mind is the essential outgrowth of its own native soil, and that no material is quite so perfectly adapted to it as the rich colour and background of that soil. . . . As for affectation—I'm not fond of any kind, but hate literary affectation most because it is more permanent and subversive in its essence. . . . The standards of good literature are ageless. . . . Of environment in general, I ask only two things—a visual beauty, scenic and

architectural of sufficiently traditional quality to have poignant significance to me; and a quiet unobtrusiveness complete enough to allow my subjective imagination to function unhampered.... Familiarity with the literature of any one period is no test at all of a critic's ability to judge a work of art in general. Genuine art is absolutely timeless.... One's opinions about immediate things are always distorted and confused by novelty and imperfect perspective.... It seems to me the plainest of all truths that no highly organized and freely developed mind can possibly envisage an external world having much in common with the external world envisaged by any other mind. The basic inclinations, yearnings, and ego-satisfactions of each separate individual depend wholly upon a myriad associations, hereditary predispositions, environmental accidents, and so on, which cannot possibly be duplicated in any other individual; hence it is foolish for anybody to expect himself to be 'understood' more than vaguely and objectively by anybody else.... I have never been able to live without the woods and fields. Just at this moment, a mournfully appropriate sound has floated across the fields in pensive timeliness. A sweet bell's notes—from the lich-gate of neighbouring Swan Point Cemetery (where the last three generations of my family lie, and where I shall some day repose) tolling at the passing of a funeral cortege. The golden light athwart this level field is exquisite, and the shadows of the elms are getting long. I think very late afternoon is the most mystical and glamorous part of all the day.... I think Mencken a sound critical influence, though of course admittedly insensitive in the domain of poetry."

29 MARCH: Young Jack Stanton, nicknamed Froly, asked me this morning in all seriousness whether it was true that I was in the habit of going to the old Lazar house—called haunted—to write my stories. Several people, he said, have mentioned this in his hearing. I could not determine whether or not the boy was pulling my leg, but apparently he was not. His dark, brooding eyes were fixed on me with grave intentness, a little suspiciously, however; he was serious, but not too gullible. I assured him that the story was a grotesque fabrication, at which he was satisfied. However, the genesis of this tale is difficult to imagine, since it is not classifiable as ordinary gossip and is not scandalous, and if there were some need for extra reason to believe me a bit tetched, it is no credit to me; heaven knows, by being natural and doing as I please, I have given enough people adequate reason to think me harmlessly deranged. It is also noteworthy that if a man gives his fellow-citizens something obvious to talk about, they will not often take the trouble to look for something more harmful.

30 MARCH: In the marshes this afternoon I saw a muskrat ferrying a large stick across the Spring Slough, not fully free of ice, and, watching him, saw others as diligently at work. In the somnolent sunlight the Hylidae came to the hummocks of brown grass along sloughs and brooks, jumping into the water where I walked. The green-bottle flies were out, buzzing lazily in the sunlit air where I sat at the brook trestle with the pleasant sound of water and redwing song in ear. I sat, drowsy, half asleep, when suddenly came the blithe song of the season's first vesper sparrow, rising

from the underbrush along the brook, over a fortnight later than last year's first.

31 MARCH: I have observed that the starling seldom mocks from the low places: roadside or field: but from the tree-tops. He seems to desire the world to know the identity of this beautiful singer, unlike his fellow mockers, the catbird and the brown thrasher, who are content to remain hidden in the bushes.

1 APRIL: In the harness shop today, Eli mentioned of old men that they are *Uhralt*—that is: clock-old, timeless.

This evening was the year's first in the marshes. The air was chill, but the quick jaunt was rewarded first by the clear sky and the colorful afterglow: all saffron, magenta, cerise, and old rose fading to lavender: and then by the accidental sight of the season's first phoebe, resting for the night in the squat elm just north of the Spring Slough trestle, and by the quavering voices of two peepers, widely separated cries welling up into the uncertain dusk from among the nocturne of song by killdeers, redwings, robins, and vesper sparrows. Venus shone in the evening sky and stood mirrored in the slough, and in the northeast Arcturus glowed amber. Returning, I saw Sirius in the pools, reflected with striking brilliance, and to one pool held with such effulgence that I paused to gaze upon the beauty of Sirius twinned, low in the heavens and in the pool, and presently took out my notebook and wrote *Star Pool.*

Here on the calm surface for this hour lies the star
Sirius cold and still as water is, and far
as afterglow is down the west tonight:
in ears this urgent dusk the flight
of woodcock over, the flight of jacksnipe over,
with never a shadow in the pool where soon the clover comes:
now only Sirius cold and blue, cold and still,
April evening warm all around, air waiting for the whip-poorwill
where the turtles chuckle in the growing dark.
Slowly the hour
goes, slowly the pool darkens: and passes
Sirius, the water-flower.

6 APRIL: In the bottoms this evening, woodcocks' mating flights were in full progress, making of the night an old magic—crying from the earth, from Bergen's Island and the lowland to eastward and taking off in their spiral flight, wings whistling in air, moving upward in ever-widening spirals, and finally beginning to modify their wing-sound with a rapid, urgent twittering, continued for only a little while before the birds descend again, and, roughly at a count of four, begin once more. The birds' small bodies were distinct against the evening sky. I stood for a while to watch them and went on to gaze at a vesper sparrow singing near the Ice Slough, his throat swollen with song. He sat facing the west, so that the last afterglow might fall upon his breast, even as at dawn he habitually faces the rising sun so that he may have the first light and warmth upon the soft feathers of his breast. Resuming my observation of the woodcocks,

I came to a pause quite close to one, and heard a faint but unmistakable wheezing sound, similar to the cluck of the whippoorwill, just preceding the nasal *peet* of the bird, and, listening intently, ascertained that it was invariable and occasionally sounded twice—but this was rare.

7 APRIL: On Monday Tom Bardshaw had contemptuously refused to repair a piece of road before Grass's house. On Tuesday Hank Grass was elected to the Village Board. On Wednesday, a day of rain and weather, Tom was on the spot, repairing the road!

11 APRIL: On the way to the hills this afternoon, I heard for the first time the sweet, clear notes of the elusive fox sparrow, coming from the underbrush while I stood watching three marsh harriers moving southward toward the flooded meadows. The song, being strange, had first to be identified; but there was no mistaking it; the fox sparrow was clearly visible, foraging about among the alders and willows, pausing from time to time to send forth his rich, sweet notes. The song is pure melody, unaccompanied by the trills and rapidly repeated notes so common to other sparrows' songs: loud, clear, and sometimes slurred single or two-note phrases. I listened to it with pleasure until the fox sparrow took wing; but by that time had fixed the song in memory.

I sat in the dip ("the demt," as Jimmy Grass once called it) atop the Big Hill, with the lovely, tawny prairie spread out before me, and the wide Wisconsin winding around the paw of land where Sac Prairie lies, and gleaming far down in the sun among the lowlands north of the Ferry Bluff

*Here on*y the prairie had become a sentient thing, with *Sirius*r promise of its black and brown soil freshly *as*, and the fragrance of this earth on the southwest ..; here and there were patches of tan, of old stubble, ..d of green—winter wheat or rye. Columns of smoke rose from lowland fires, pillared upon the clear, intense blue of the April sky, billowed out by the wind, and presently dispersed before others rising from unseen fires on the southern rim of earth. A loon swam solitarily near the wing dam, making its weird call twice, and the village lay as in a dream across the river. All around in the grass the pasque flowers bent and twisted in the fresh, fragrant wind.

12 APRIL: Walking past the Marzolf house late this evening on my way to Bachhubers', I heard rising from the dark, tree-shrouded house, the pleasant, muted music of hymns being played there on a piano. I was astonished, because I had never heard music there before, because I had not been aware of a piano's presence in the house. I thought it must be Mrs. Marzolf playing there, but no, it was George, for so he himself subsequently informed me. "I like to play the old songs," he said. I replied that I liked to hear them, and, indeed, the music was of a piece with the quiet pervasive charm of the April night.

16 APRIL: With Don Wandrei and mother, rode to Plain today, where we left mother at the Beck house, while we drove on over past aunt Annie's old place, to Spring Green and Taliesin, from which we returned leisurely to Plain to wait for mother, gone to pay her respects to old Mrs. Beck,

who had died. Came mother finally and, with her, cousin Kate, neither looking particularly doleful, which was unusual. It turned out that they had been sitting *at lunch* all this time, instead of praying rosaries, which is far more usual. Admittedly it is difficult to feel doleful at lunch. Cousin Kate, however, as soon as we were out of the village on the way back to Sac Prairie, said it would have been so much fun "if it wasn't so sad." And from this springboard she launched again into her endless grief about cousin Caspar, now over a year dead. "If only he could've said one word," she complained anew, "but he had to die without." I assured her that she should comfort herself; Cap would have something left to say to her when she crossed over—unless, of course, they went to different places. Despite her lack of resignation, she came back at me quickly enough, opining that if anyone went a different road, it would most likely be me. "I don't believe you know how to pray," she said. I replied that I did, but did not exercise the faculty often, since I had so many relatives like herself who prayed long and fulsomely and occupied so much of the Deity's time. Her attention was diverted by a place in the Pocket where Tuberg's hired man was found dead of sunstroke, he having gone out into a hot, sultry afternoon and worked alone in the Pocket field, and lain there until the horses coming back without him alarmed the household. She began to recall other deaths then, and went on about them; this seemed to give her a measure of sad satisfaction and compensation for her own long-lasting sorrow.

19 APRIL: To the marshes after breakfast, with field glasses, and, over the brook, saw a jacksnipe in flight. I fixed the

bird in the glasses, and so saw that his similarity to the woodcock was marked, save for a difference in coloring and a slightly longer wingspread. The jacksnipe's flight, however, is constant and erratic, not short and quickly ended as is the woodcock's, and the booming sound of air in his wings, the deep *whoo-ooo-oo-o,* is made when the bird describes quick descents in small dipping curves, breaking his high, wide-circling flight with fair regularity. His typical call is not unlike the woodcock's *peet,* but more muted and not as harsh, less regular, and more urgent.

When I turned from watching the jacksnipe, I found myself facing Hank Blum, who was on the way to his farm from the village. He said he was going to help "the boy" do chores, and finally confessed that, now he was away from the farm, he did not know what to do with himself, but found himself drawn back to the land all the time. A man must work with his hands if he has always done so; and so it should be. I watched him cross Lenson's meadow for a brief moment before I turned to walk where the skunk cabbages flowered now, lovely in their russet hoods and purple spathes yellow with starlike bloom, among the budding marigolds and pollenating willows.

20 APRIL: Under the cool rain today, the leaves of lilacs and flowering currant are beginning to open, and the elm buds are wide all over Sac Prairie, so that within a week the leaves will show. Already their faint perfume lies along the lanes. Rain has brought the squills to fullest flower too, blue circles and rows beside old houses making tangible the spring.

23 APRIL: Children played this evening around bonfires, built under the blossoming elm and soft maple trees, and the windy smoke, together with their wild, free voices, was nostalgic indeed! I thought how often the village spring is heralded by these small things, after all—bonfires, street-

lights pale yellow against the afterglow, the south wind and sweet air, with smoke in it and the wild crying of children, freed from winter to play in streets and parks again. I stood for a while buried deep in the sounds and odors of the April night; the wind carried the smoky smell of leaves, the fragrance of lilac and apple foliage, the urgence of the month of flowers coming, and, as I stood in the shadows of the park, thinking of past springs, my attention was arrested by old

Mrs. Stillman, who had run away again. She stood on the corner beyond the Park Hall and stared upward through the thickening elms, beyond the streetlight toward the stars, and flung her shrill voice into space there, scolding and berating something invisible to any other eye. By the thin, pale glow of the same streetlight, I wrote *Mrs. Emma Stillman,* while she wandered away down the shadowed streets to meet the voice of her daughter, rising petulant and angry at the old woman's escape.

Mindless in those days, she used to run away
at evening, stand beneath the streetlight, look
upward toward the stars, and speak as from a book
the broken, jumbled words that held no meaning.
By day
she sat there on the porch, in sun and rain,
a small squat figure, gray against the old red brick;
even there her aged voice was thick
and meaningless. She ran away time and again,
quickly as her short stout legs could carry her,
took her stand beneath the ancient elms near by
and stared into the starswept sky,
dark in her muttering as every stir
of wind in leaves.

These were the glories of her mindless place:
the vast, illimitable deeps of outer space.

24 APRIL: Old Mrs. Hantselmann opened her small cellar windows today. They are but a foot long and half a foot wide, and are paneless, having only screens, which open directly into the cellar. There is no danger of rain coming

in, because the walls are thick in these old houses, but all winter long the windows are papered over and boarded up, and it was this protective covering which she took away. She explained to me from over the fence why such care was necessary and spoke proudly of last year's fine potato crop.

In the library late this afternoon I learned with sharp angry shock that Jo was ill, and apparently incurably so. This has been then the source of the trouble lying half-hidden behind her eyes. Cancer, she said. "I suspected it," she went on, calmly enough. "When they sent me to Madison, the girl left my diagnosis lying open, and I read it. So I knew, and I don't think it can be cured." She is taking treatments, however, and will know soon enough.

I strove to keep my anger at this fate from betraying itself, and led her away to speak of Hester Duff, who had recently bought one of my great-uncle's houses, and found herself with some of his old-fashioned six-sided coffins on hand. So she called up both undertakers and tried to sell the coffins to them: fifty years old or more, they are, and she thought they might still be used at profit to her. Failing at this, she resourcefully tore them apart to use them for lining in the walls of cabins she hoped to rent to tourists!

Jo added a little tale of her own about Hester: how, on one occasion, Hester had attached herself to Jo while Jo was taking the school census, and had led her across the road from a moonshiner's home ostensibly to examine the ground, but in reality to show her a still carefully concealed along the riverbank there, whereupon the owner came from his house and summoned Jo to see a "peculiar grass" grow-

ing next his house, in reality only a common weed, and Hester had been frustrated. The library's closing interrupted the flow of this reminiscence; so we parted, myself contemplating with depression Jo's approaching end, knowing how little the village could afford to lose her.

26 APRIL: During dinner at grandfather Derleth's place today, I listened while he told about old Merrihew's Mill, built in 1861 on the site of Grell's Mill, succeeding a previous building on that bank of the pond. "Your great-grandfather Derleth walked out and back every day to work on the building for seventy-five cents a day," he said. "That mill was known for miles around, for fifty miles on every side; farmers brought their wheat from all over to be ground into flour. But two years later it burned down. It was in August, I remember, and I went out to see it. They rebuilt it not long after."

He was garrulous today, and reminisced without halting, though he spoke from time to time of death. "Old Kuhn, now—they found him halfway in, and halfway out of his boat. He'd filled up the boat with rocks he gathered at the wing dam, and the man who found him came down from the north along the hills and around the wing dam in his rowboat and came on the old man's head floating there in the water. He'd overworked, loading up those heavy rocks, and had had a heart attack and died there. Why, for days that time he was hauling rocks and stones from the wing dam to his house across the river. Yes," he said, in answer to my query, "it was across from the house where Helen Hahn now lives."

He could not remember the name of the man who was

found after having drowned on the Mazomanie side of the flats, along the river at the Yellowbanks road, the man about whom is told the classic tale that his son, upon finding him to have put on his best boots in which to commit suicide, had become enraged, and, striving to take them off, had torn his father's leg out at the hip. He deserted death presently, and began to talk about young Schlegemüllig's dachshund, which they called Dacksy, and how, as boys, they used to hitch the dog to a wagon and go out to gather nuts in the fall, often getting not only hickory nuts and butternuts, but also white acorns for the hogs, hauling from Pillep's across the river, as well as from an area four miles west of the village on the prairie. For over an hour he talked about various things: how tough the hobos of the 1860's were, carrying knives, most of them, and inviting the beatings they got at the hands of the boys; how the boardinghouse north of Dickerson's Slough had fallen to decay after the sawmill, operating just below there on the river's edge, had shut down; how most of the Irish settlers had avoided the village and gone West Point way to live—all but his friends, the McTyes, who had subsequently gone to Texas. Only when he got up to go outside and sit beside the bed of squills along the west wall, grandmother's favorite bed, did he cease to reminisce, lost in contemplation not meant for words.

29 APRIL: I went back over the hills into Wright's Valley today and descended the slope in search of the delicate, fragile hepaticas. They were out, but scant as yet; in two days or so of sunshine and warmth, the valley's slopes will be pale blue, pink, white, and lavender with their small

blossoms. I picked one and held it to my nostrils, and after a while it occurred to me that there is a decided, if faint, similarity to the fragrance of wild crab-apple bloom, but perhaps a little more delicate. I sat down in a little open space near a birch grove on the slope, marking the bright beauty of the hepaticas among the brown leaves covering the woodland floor here, and listening to the tumultuous mocking music of a brown thrasher, swinging in the birch trees and unafraid of me. I lay back a little, and my eye was caught by a great bird in flight above, clearly even at this distance a falcon of some kind, but larger than most falcons common to this area. I turned binoculars on him, and knew I had never before seen this falcon, though at first I thought him a duck hawk. But his larger size, his slow wingbeats, his uniform gray made him certainly a gyrfalcon, undoubtedly in migration: either a gray or a great black gyrfalcon. He soared, he wheeled, mounting steadily upward, and at last he literally vanished into the heavens. But something he brought to the day was not lost.

3 MAY: I made my way to the brook this afternoon, taking the fencelike line from Highway Twelve, so that I could look down upon the brook, shimmering in the sun and winding through the valley far below, and so that I could copy the inscription on the lone gravestone still standing at the field's edge, left alone of all those once there when the now long-ruined chapel was occupied by Father Inama. HIER RUHET SUSANNE GRAEPEL GEBD 27TEN SEPT. 1819 GEST 4TEN JUNY 1848 SANFT RUHE IHRE ASCHE. At the chapel's ruins, I descended the slope along a disused road there and wandered leisurely back along the familiar brook to the place

where the flowers grow. The dutchman's breeches made white and green the brooksides, giving off a delicate fragrance such as most early spring flowers have, as if the earth were not yet sufficiently nourished to sustain a stronger fragrance. Anemones flowered here and there, but only a few, while up around the bend, the deep purple hepaticas with their white stamens glowed and shone in the dark green all around, and, examining them, I saw a great variety of colors: red-purple, pale and dark lavender, blue, amethyst, blue-white, pink, and others, including all possible variations of these colors.

Pausing to dam the brook at the old place for dams, saw limned against the pale green leafing trees a black-crowned night heron, who took off as soon as I had got a good look at him, his slow, heavy flight taking him just over the trees and no more. I turned back to the brook, and cleaned out sticks, leaves, and stones to make a waterfall and so increase the melody of water sounding there between the slopes of the valley. The water was cold, but refreshing, and soon this old magic had captured me.

An hour passed before I went on along the hill's crest, crossed the woodlot to the field's edge, and walked up along the southeast slope of Breunig's Hill, sitting down at last at the hilltop from which I could see not only the Gray's *Elegy* setting of Roxbury with its church, cemetery, and cluster of houses, not only the widespreading fields with many farmers and horses working there, but also a heavy downpour of rain at the Wisconsin Heights, white in the sunlight still shining here. I went on along the hilltop into the northwest and west, pausing once more at the hawthorn bush to look out to where Crystal and Fish Lakes lay bril-

liantly azure under the sun, and to watch farmers in their fields. In my line of vision, a plowshare gleamed like molten silver in the sun where it stood on the field's edge, and at the foot of the hill, just beyond the road and farm there, framed by red farm buildings on one side, pasture on another, and woods on two, a farmer dragged down a large warm brown field. I could not help thinking how small he looked, how symbolic was his smallness in the field, symbolic of man against all earth, against nature, and presently, before turning homeward, put down *Farmer Afield.*

One side the pasture fence: old, worn, and brown:
red barn and windmill turning down
the slope where rain-pools hold all sky's
fleece and blue: and on the last two sides the
thickening wood, where sunlight lies
all afternoon in May—within, plowed field,
up which and down he goes, totting up his yield
with hope of sun and rain, and not too much of either.

Here on this hill
I know what never touches on his thought as he goes
up and down there in the still
and sunbright field, upturning furrow for the
lingering hawk to see the heart in mouse and
not in stone:
neither for distance nor for height, but for kinship
know how small he is, and how alone.

4 MAY: Hugh and I went into the marshes this evening, haunted all along the way down by the sweet smell of *Waldmeister*—woodruff or sweet-scented bedstraw, some call it—

and pondering what odors combine to make up what is called, for lack of anything better, "the smell of growing" or of "growing things." Turned earth, hidden blossoms, flowing sap, fresh spring water, brooks, the river, and the smell of leaves of all kinds—these all over village and country around; in the marshes, the smell of opened sloughs and the lingering of last year's leaves are added to these. Actually, it must depend upon place; where leaves lie thickly upon the ground, their odor is an integral part of this smell of growing things; so too with water; and on upland slopes earth and sap fragrance are strongest—in final analysis, these are possibly most typical. But each alone is good to the nostrils, stimulating and enlivening. In these still days and nights, the smell of growing things hangs everywhere in pockets and quiet woodland places; in the lee of hills it is strongest on windy days, but even on hilltops it rides the wind. And it permeates Sac Prairie. Tonight the smell of land once water-covered and now free, of old leaves and grass, of sloughs with the subtle suggestion of stagnation and decay, of new leaves and sap, held to the air, making it ineffably sweet, fresh and clear almost as after rain, when every odor rises doubly strong, and the air is hung with scores of sweet and pungent smells before they become diffused and mingle again.

Hugh crossed the bog after watercress and marigolds while I waited on the embankment, listening to the redwings, the sweet-voiced Hyla choir, the tranquil song of meadow larks and vesper sparrows, the caroling of robins and bluebirds, and a distant killdeer. I sat listening for the whippoorwill to start singing from the brook, and presently

heard first his *quirt, quirt,* and then, promptly half an hour after sundown, the song came welling forth from the dusk-bound woods. I noticed this evening that whenever the bird broke his call, he took it up again at the following syllable, thus: *whippoorwill, whippoorwill, whip-,* begun once more so—*poorwill, whippoorwill,* and so on. In the midst of this attentive listening, I was startled by a robin's bursting into full carol near by, despite the thickening darkness, and continuing for some time before subsiding into a few uncertain cheepings and silence. A whippoorwill sang suddenly, too, beyond Lenson's, and another in Whippoorwill Hollow among the Ganser Hills. By this time the Hyla chorus was full-throated and pulsed through the night, and when Hugh rejoined me on the embankment, only Hylidae and whippoorwills saluted the emergence of stars.

6 MAY: Coming home this evening, I heard and saw children playing hide and seek in the park, and others playing about a bonfire in the street not far away; and at once I was struck with a pleasant nostalgic memory of how at one time I too played blindman's buff, statue, run-sheep-run, and hide-and-go-seek, always waiting apprehensively for the streetlights to come on, knowing soon we would be called to bed. I stood watching them, while lines came to mind, and, going home, wrote one of the *Lost Child* poems.

Bright flame, bright glow,
smoke sweet in windy air
where still the lost child and his childhood
linger with children gay in bonfire glow,
in sweet, in pungent smoke forever where

lemon streetlights scrape and bow
in autumn wind of evening now,
where trees bend close, bend over near
the lost child with no fear . . .

Along the streets the fires bright
spread their yellow light:

the lost child lingers there forever,
where no one sees, where no one knows;
less he is than the dry leaf that blows
along the walk.

Forever
he is there in bonfire glow;
cradling his childhood less than smoke
under the sweet-leaved oak:

child lost, forever lost:
in April dusk, in hot July, in time of frost—
lost, forever lost . . .

7 MAY: Late tonight, passing into the park, I met Jettyx, who said he had just finished his bill-peddling. I wondered casually how many years he has been at it: putting out bills, peddling papers, all with unusual fidelity and a certain grim honesty, but I did not ask. He took off his cap and reset it on his head, observing that he was tired. Small wonder! I thought, going from house to house in both Upper and Lower Sac Prairie; as accustomed as he may get to it, the task is no less tiring, for the pittance he receives. He said it was lucky for him the evening papers came in a little

earlier now; he had more time and could finish before midnight. He smiled, and I thought, whatever failings he may have, he can at least always smile, he is good-hearted; only when he feels someone has had the better of him does he carry a face like a thundercloud. He went on up the street, walking with a peculiar swinging gait, doubtless the result of his years of trudging streets and paths.

11 MAY: Effie told me tonight that at supper table Harold had been trying to instruct the boys in the names of the common communicable diseases they might contract in school. Jack and David were expected to know them, and, indeed, had them all down but one, which was smallpox, a varioloid case of which I had had two years ago. Harold, remembering that I had had it, kept asking the two older boys, "Well, what was it Augie had?" But they could not answer, and finally, to shame them, he turned to the youngest. "Dick, you tell them—what did Augie have?" Richard looked up at him wide-eyed, thinking of what I always have, and said gravely, "Gum!"

12 MAY: A heavy rain during a short storm in the morning's early hours, followed by sunlight at seven, made the air heavy with wet odors and the horizon hazy with rain and vapor. The apple blossoms were out at last, some days after the first plum blooms broke in the south end of town. The fragrance of blossoms lay heavily over all the village now, met at every corner and lane and bypath, where trees were white clouds against the blue sky. With this perfume came that of the flowering currant, strong as ever. Soon now the

lilacs will be taking possession of the air. The country children, coming in to school, carried hands full of flowers: puccoon, purple aven, birdfoot violets.

On my way past the Upper Meadow this afternoon I heard a bittern calling and, with my glasses, found him easily enough. He had already seen me and was squatting in the long brown grass with his neck and bill upturned, looking very much like the worn stump of some broken willow straggling upward from a hummock there. Lowering my binoculars, I found that I could see him easily enough without them, and presently located a second. Though both had seen me, I remained inanimate enough to deceive them. It was the second bird who called, and by dint of persistent patience (with which I am not overly endowed), I was able to ascertain precisely what ritual he went through in making his weird *unk-a-dunk* cry—for it is rather a three-note call than a two-note, and rather a *pumping* than a cry, for it sounds very much like an old pump protesting its use. The bird lowers his neck, twists it backward a little, and then throws his head forward, so that the various notes of the call are voiced thusly: *unk* at the lowering of the neck, *a* at the twisting, and *dunk* at the throwing forward motion.

When they flew up and toward the Spring Slough, I saw how sunlight in the foliage of the trees edging the slough foretold autumn: through transparent maroon leaves, pale green, yellow—of maple, oak, poplars: so that all the colors of autumn were there, less brilliant perhaps, even as in winter small signs presage the spring, and as, indeed, each season carries the signature of coming seasons.

13 MAY: I heard downtown this evening that today was one of the "three Ice Men," in reference to the local belief that if frost fails to come on any one of the nights of May 12, 13, and 14, it will not come again before autumn. Nikki Truckenbrodt said that the late Dr. Mueller, having forgotten the saints' names for the first two, used to call the days *Frau Crusius, Frau Lampertius, und Bonifacius.*

14 MAY: At the far end of Bergen's Island I met Curley Prugh tonight. He had loaded up a cart full of sand in pails and bushel baskets, and had along his oldest son, a wide-eyed and pale child of five or thereabouts. "I got the kids some sand," he said, and presently rambled on about a bright star he had seen. He pointed it out, and I identified it for him. Capella. I showed him also Mars, just risen, and smoldering redly in the east. He pointed out the stars to LaVerne, making clear their color difference, and the boy took an intense interest, looking from planet to star repeatedly, as if determined to fix them in his memory.

15 MAY: All day long I encountered much talk about house cleaning among the village women. I have observed that in this semiannual affair all women are very much alike, regardless of what social differences they elect to affect. Sometimes, encountering them at the height of this cleaning, I am constrained to think that there is nothing else on God's green earth like a woman in the throes. It is almost a phobia. Most of them fix upon a day to begin cleaning, and not rain or snow or storm moves them in the least; if indeed something prevents them from work, they are lost, they go about

the house mumbling distractedly and suspecting destiny of ominous designs, as if tomorrow or next week would not do as well.

16 MAY: On the way home from the marshes tonight I met Curley again. He said that LaVerne had been much impressed by what I had to say about the orbit of Capella, and had asked him last night when the star would go around like that, thinking it a nightly occurrence, and, swinging his arm in imitation, suddenly saw Vega, mistook it for Capella, and cried in disappointment, "There it is now; it did it and I missed it!" A little diffidently, Curley wanted to know more about the stars, so that he could tell his son. I forgot about work waiting to be done and identified the constellations for him.

17 MAY: In attendance upon the third of the suppers for the Men's Club tonight, I realized with a certain grim amusement that already most of its members referred to it as "The Businessmen's Club," which it was distinctly not meant to be. I was almost overcome by the wealth of platitudes uttered and profoundly depressed by what passed for singing. This, said Karl, was meant to give them all "the spirit," "to bind them together into a union," "to establish harmony," "to weld them into one mass." The only mass of which I could think in the circumstances of the excruciating caterwauling was cottage cheese.

19 MAY: This afternoon on the hills, I noticed that the smell of the birdfoot violet (*Viola pedata*) rises very subtly in quiet places in the heat, and, hanging there, as often the colum-

bine's fragrance does in June, it grows stronger, more manifest. This is true also of the cedar, which gives off a sort of tawny pungence, especially when pollenating.

20 MAY: I called this morning on Millie Pohlmann and was delighted with the fine old atmosphere of her house. She showed me her mother's spinning wheel, which I had come specifically to see, and explained that it was the custom in that part of Germany from which the Pohlmanns had come (Hesse), that the oldest daughter of the house receive her mother's spinning wheel at her marriage. The wheel in evidence, therefore, must date from the 1840's. "All girls in mother's time had to learn spinning. And in those days, it was the custom to have spinning-parties instead of showers for the betrothed, and each guest had to spin a certain amount before she was permitted to go home. But they never went home. After the spinning was done, they sat around, cracked nuts, ate lunch, played games, and danced."

In the early days of Sac Prairie, all yarn and flax was originally dyed at "the dyer's," who supplied spinners with charts of dyed wool from which to choose colors. The spinners also rented a meadow in which to bleach linen, and sometimes hired guards to stay night and day to watch linen staked down on the meadow to dry. But later on, she continued, home dyes were used: made of butternut, walnut, and certain berries and leaves. The old things in her home give it a charming atmosphere of time past. I looked around at her samplers, her old furniture, the knick-knacks, and, as I rose to go, discovered a photograph of an extremely handsome young woman; this held my eye. Though her dress was of the seventies or eighties, I thought I might know her

name, and asked Millie. "Why," laughed Millie, "that's me!" And, indeed, so it was.

21 MAY: Hugh and I to the marshes this evening, encountering Pete and his dog, Mike. Pete was at the moment undergoing some difficulty with Mike, so that all the dog's inadequate training was exhibited at its worst. Hugh could not help casting a few oblique aspersions on Mike, but Pete bore them philosophically. "I have hopes," he said. Hugh shook his head. The dog performs faithfully, and follows a deadly pattern—he hits a rabbit trail and races wildly into the underbrush, yapping frantically, tearing along on the trail while Pete stands trying to estimate Mike's speed and general performance, cigarette in hand, head cocked to one side, as if the dog were a second Bugle Ann, only to be brought rudely back to earth by Mike's inevitable finish, the losing of the trail, the whining, circling, and return. The dog is overfed and fat, too affectionate, and never animated apparently by any genuine desire to hunt. Watching him, Hugh observed dryly that "hope springs eternal—and maybe even in a dog's breast."

23 MAY: Waking in the night, I heard a screech owl sobbing gently from the apple tree, his the only voice coming from the moonlit darkness, and, finding paper and pencil in the light streaming down across the sill from the moon, I wrote a poem for Maris: *Screech Owl Calling.*

Late in that night a screech owl called, crying
from the apple at the orchard wall,
not like a bird at all, but a wind sighing
there for the lost blossoms, remembering how fall

walked passively to westward. There in that dark
its song fell more softly than sounds night
makes in the small hours, than the song of a lark
ascending too early in the pale light
of the morning star. No stronger than the first rain
in April sadly calling home my heart,
it woke me once, and yet again
in the still dark, and in this night apart
from other nights, I lay remembering how the song
in that shadowed tree fell across the silent years
like the slow caress, the withheld urgence, the long
forgotten touch of fingers caught by years:
pale stars above that lonely tree
yellow as your eyes remembered in the sun:
only the night's far-flung wind free
of hours, days, and years long done.
And in that dark I thought of your hair with the wind
in it,
your hands and bees' song in the clover,
your eyes where the song of the linnet
with the tall white clouds hangs over;
I thought of your slow-curved mouth, a spring
remembered for its fairest flowers;
in the call of the owl, soon on the wing
away again, remembered—and forgot all snow-clad
ancient hours.

25 MAY: I observed with some interest today how old Mr. Ilg, the gardener, touches his hat with his hand in greeting anyone, regardless of sex, and wondered whether this was not the result of Swiss training, possibly in the army there.

It is curious that I should have accepted this gesture for so long without noticing that it is not an affectation, but an essential part of the man, for he never fails to touch his hat respectfully. For me, he seems too to have an especial regard, for he honors me with the title, *professor,* not with the mockery that came with it years ago, when it vied with *Sherlock* and *Dowtcher.* He makes a fine portrait with his bright blue eyes and his white hair and moustache, but, because of his Swiss dialect, he is extremely difficult to understand, so that it is necessary always to agree with him, and to reply in the negative only when his inflection seems to call for it, or else to do all the talking myself. From the way he has looked at me in conversation on occasion, I have no doubt he has been amused at my shortcomings, but has been too polite to make them obvious; I am not sure that I do not mind his keeping the joke from my own enjoyment of it.

With his nose eternally in someone else's business, Tom Bardshaw discovered a drunk sleeping behind the Eagle House today and went hastily to find the marshal. Skinny came none too eagerly, with Tom following about a half block behind, sidling rather like a crab along the buildings in a manner which would have been approved by the authors of *Nick Carter, Old Sleuth,* and *The Bradys.* Tom peered cautiously around the corner of the building while Skinny stood above the drunk and pondered what to do. His decision was wise enough: Since the man was peaceful and likely to remain so unless awakened, he could be left alone. Tom, however, was mightily disappointed, and made off, crestfallen and chagrined.

Apparently there exists in Roxbury a quaint custom about engagements—when a girl begins to go with a young man, she must be invited to the young man's home by his mother for a meal, or otherwise their going together cannot be presumed to be approved.

26 MAY: Barney Merkel went up and down rows of his plants in the lot along Water Street today sprinkling them from a can in the middle of a rainstorm, which struck me as the last word in skepticism.

28 MAY: On the way to the hills this afternoon, I paused at Pillep's farm to talk with Mrs. Pillep and Frieda. They had in any case wanted to show me some mushrooms, which I identified as ink-caps, no longer edible, unfortunately. In the course of subsequent conversation, Mrs. Pillep said that she had all her life wanted a wild crab-apple tree, not for

the blossoms, but because "the apples taste so good canned." I asked her how to can them, since I had heard that the apple of the wild crab tree was very hard and tart. Her recipe was evidently a very old one. "You take and make a syrup with raisins in it. You take the apples, boil them a little in water with baking soda in it, and the skin comes off like on peaches. You cut about four slices off the cheeks of the apple and boil with the raisin syrup. It's the sweetest preserve I ever tasted." I wondered whether it would still seem so sweet to her, or whether time has enhanced its taste in her memory. "I remember it from when I was a young girl; my, it was good!"

Frieda mentioned the school picnic, which had this year so disappointed me with its basket lunches in place of the old institutional suppers that I had ignored it altogether. Mrs. Pillep said that she invariably contributed without question to everything for which she was asked. "Not like some of them over here," she pointed out. She could not keep herself from telling a story about two of the Catholic farmwomen, whom she had overheard talking together on a party line about a joint picnic sponsored by public and parochial schools in Sac Prairie, as is the custom. "Well," said one woman to the other, "I didn't give anything. If it was for the Catholics alone I would have. But I don't approve of this going together like that. I told my kids to come home before they serve supper." The ignorant flourish and live in bliss.

30 MAY: En route to the marshes this evening with Hugh, I was stopped by strangers sitting on the Schmidt lawn; they had evidently learned my identity from the Schmidts, and could not keep a certain curiosity out of their attention.

They were introduced to me, and immediately began to ply me with questions. I was dull, however, being natural, and besides in a hurry to overtake Hugh, who had impatiently gone ahead. However, I escaped them shortly, leaving them disappointed. I could not help reflecting that people seem to expect a creative artist to be of especial personal interest, and particularly witty, as people watching monkeys are always expecting them to pick scales or to be obscene, so that afterward they may relate their experience with much relish. The worst of this high expectation of people in regard to creative minds is their failure to realize that they ought rather to expect a greater naturalness from them; and the irony of their own failure is that they will go about afterward and say that they met the author, that after all he was not particularly impressive, even a little dull-witted, and they will presume to be patronizing in their superficial opinions forever after.

31 MAY: Returning from the hills this windy afternoon, I found that the Village Board, without turning off the regular traffic signals, had placed, instead of the village marshal, Ted Decot in the middle of the street at the bridge corner to direct the heavy tourist and holiday traffic. The result, of course, was that the harassed motorists never knew whether to abide by the lights or to follow Ted's direction, performed with much wild swinging of arms. I stood to wait for the inevitable, and presently it occurred; one traveler, playing safe, stopped for the light, and a second, seeing only Ted, came on and tore off the tail light of the first car. The ensuing difficulty was further complicated by the decision of three Village Board members to go into a huddle

to decide the problem, which would have been simplified by turning off the regular traffic signals, a conclusion to which they did presently come, though I did not stay to wait. Leaving, I called out to them that one more Board member would make a quorum, whereat they were not pleased, contrary to the temper of the crowd.

1 JUNE: Hugh wanted to know today about Harrods' moving, and I told him, thinking of the tragedy of the second girl, kept so much to the house, repressed and alone with her sisters gone, and her mother harshly domineering, remembering the night she had wanted to run away, pathetically, "to get myself a man," and her mother would have had her taken permanently away: a neurotic, inhibited girl of twenty, with fawnlike eyes and a sadness about her face not commonly found in one so young; but they would not take her, and so she sat night after night on the low stoop of the front porch of the house at the foot of Water Street, where that street becomes *Rheinpreussenstrasse,* as of old, sat there looking at the stars and the streets and the people passing by, her mother behind the curtains at the window to be sure that she went no farther, especially not up into the heart of the town, where she might shyly bring someone a handkerchief she had embroidered, or come into a store to buy a little something just to be near some young man working there, someone who had taken her eye. Now they have gone to Milwaukee, and perhaps there she may be rescued from her mother, and it may be that some man will be gentle enough with her and patient enough to rescue her from herself.

2 JUNE: Despite intermittent rain, I went this afternoon to Wisconsin Heights to look over once again the battlefield for the scene of the battle in *Wind Over Wisconsin,* taking note especially of the configuration of the earth there and the probable manner of Black Hawk's escape. Foliage and grasses were heavily pearled with raindrops, and the whiskers of the purple aven (locally called *grandpa's whiskers*) were especially lovely, webbed and pendant with glistening drops. Spiderwort blossomed bluely, wild sweet william was fragrant along the hillside, and yellow daisies were bright all over the old battleground. In the meadows the blue lupins flowered still, and underfoot blossomed wild ginger, wood sorrel, and the cinquefoils. Along the roadside below, the first wild roses shone pink and cerise.

The landscape all around was exceedingly beautiful to the eye, and especially so today, for when I reached the top of the hill range once so memorably held by the Sacs under Black Hawk, I saw that the blanket of clouds which had covered the sky all day had begun to lift from the northwest, so that the sun shone yellowly on the northern hills and the extremity of the upper prairie there, gleaming on the wet countryside, and reflected from every ventilator and window on barn and house as much as ten miles away, the sky an intense, heavenly clear blue behind, and the dark clouds steadily if slowly rising toward the zenith and uncovering the sun. I sat to watch the sunlight flowing southward over the village and the river, over Bergen's Island and the meadows to the hill.

I shared the hilltop, I discovered presently, with a little hog-nosed snake, who had got quite close to me before dis-

covering me, and, at my sudden movement, drew itself together in high alarm and distended its head, hissing furiously. I picked it up and held it squirming along my arm for a little while, raising it to my nostrils to determine whether or not it had a noticeable odor. But it had none strong enough to detect at any distance; so I put it down again, whereupon this harmless little snake, which has nothing but its swelling head and its opossum tactics with which to defend itself, turned over on its back and played dead. I turned it to its belly, but the snake obstinately turned again, determined to be thought dead. But after a while it apparently reached a momentous decision, that I was harmless, and slithered off. I thought of Miss Lahman, who had seen one of these snakes in the Baraboo Bluffs, and had come screaming about "spotted adders" down to the road, ever thereafter narrating a breath-taking story of her narrow escape from death.

3 JUNE: Out on the prairie west of the village, the sweet wild crabapple holds the last of its ineffably fragrant blossoms, being torn relentlesly away by the wind, and tonight I wrote *Wild Crabapple Blooming.*

On the prairie now the wild crabapple tree is blooming
its last, pink and white, no flower sweeter,
and May a month of flowers: hepaticas, anemones, violets,
lilacs, locusts: with days passing on fleeter
feet than any month's. Nothing is fragrant as this flower
is, but there is finally one hour
beyond which even it does not remain,
and now against that time fends only rain.

This is the last evening for it, wind tearing
at its petals, and the thin year wearing
at the tree.
I can see
how its petals fall at the wind like foreknown snow,
December's,
old tree, old as the vacancy of airs is old, it stands, remembers
Indian soft sounds in July damp leaf-smell when summer
stood like ends of time achieved for the Indian to know
as briefly as windy smoke. Spring will be coming again,
and the flowers again, but the slow
year grows lonely before. Here in the last evening of the
wild sweet crabapple, the reaches of my heart are
not where afterglow falls, but in shadow,
with the petals fading in the wind into dimness over
prairie, in tall grasses, caught in leaves, in cobwebs
in the branches and fence-rails. The reaches of my
heart are: tree, petal like snow—and man below.

The early moon
last will remember how tree-cloud white on prairie soon
quivered, was rent, was thinned
in the night, under rising cloud-pile, by the wind.

4 JUNE: Discussing with Hugh this evening before the harness shop a certain marriage which had taken place recently, he said it had been "a military wedding: bristling with shotguns."

While we sat there, little Billy Hahn went past carrying

a carp which certainly weighed ten pounds; it was so heavy that he could hardly carry it, and another small boy accompanied him to carry his pole for him. Billy was very proud; he must have had a struggle to land so large a fish. Hugh smiled, and I knew that he, too, was thinking of the disappointment Billy would in all likelihood suffer when he got the fish home and was told that it was of no use. Both Hugh and I underwent the same disappointment following the flush of success, the wild elation, the pride of having caught something despised as food only for chickens. Didn't people pickle carp? we wanted to know. Didn't some people put them down in vinegar with pigs' feet? All to no avail; the carp was scaled and set out for the chickens, and we might have the dubious consolation of eating it secondhand in the eggs the hens would undoubtedly lay. Never did eggs taste so little like fish!

6 JUNE: In Upper Sac Prairie this evening, I came upon an old sign scrawled upon a wall along a back street: *Landon or Bust!* Beneath it, someone had subsequently written: *Bust then!!*

7 JUNE: Walking with Karl along Juniper Bluff this afternoon, we flushed a nighthawk suddenly almost from underfoot. The bird almost fell downhill for a distance of about twenty feet, in an obvious effort to hold our attention. I set about looking at once for the eggs I hoped would be in evidence, and soon found them, two of them, a gray-white mottled with specks of darker gray and simply laid among stones of similar size, with no semblance of nest whatever, but an excellent example of protective coloring. The bird

watched, sitting in its customary position lengthwise on a limb not far away, but was not alarmed, and returned to the nest shortly after we started down the slope.

9 JUNE: Fred Sprattler told me, standing on a corner of Water Street tonight, that a priest in a neighboring town used always to put on marionette shows, especially of religious subjects, his favorite play being named *Christ Is Risen.* One night he had trouble with his puppets, and the audience began to grow restless, hooting and clapping, until the poor man was so distracted that he rushed out upon the stage and shouted, "Christ will not rise tonight. The string broke!"

10 JUNE: On the way to the marshes tonight with Hugh, three of Ewald Meyer's children, playing in the sand dug up by excavators for the sewer system, greeted us gravely and not a little sympathetically, and, after we had passed, the oldest of the three—surely not more than five—leaned over and whispered gravely to the others, one of whom had observed and commented upon my cane, "He can't walk right!" in a voice simply dripping with sympathy.

12 JUNE: Mrs. Just died in the night, at eighty-three, and in her own home. Many times the suggestion was made to remove her from this home of hers to one of her children's houses. "My husband died here and I'll die here," she said repeatedly, and so she did. People said she was crusty. But people who hold to their own opinions concerning themselves and who will have their way are always crusty or selfish or self-willed to those whom they defeat.

17 JUNE: Passing Meyer's house on the way to the marshes tonight, Hugh and I saw him enthroned upon a home-made chair behind the house like any king, and issuing orders one after the other to his brood, who were in mad haste to obey, so that one ran one way, a second another, and a third still another way; and as soon as one came back, he was sent off again under the impetus of another order, all of which seemed to give Meyer a great gratification, for he neither looked right nor left, failing thus to see us watching him, but continued to accept the things the children brought him as a king might accept the homage of his subjects, manifesting a fitting sense of his importance as head of the family. No doubt, both children and father enjoyed themselves.

18 JUNE: As I walked along the Spring Slough trestle this morning, I heard a great commotion in the water beneath and, looking down, saw just slipping off a discarded tie into the water a mallard hen and ten young. The hen, having seen me, went fluttering out along the Spring Slough's surface, dragging herself through the algae and pondweeds with one wing flapping erratically, and she all the while crying and wailing piteously. For some two hundred yards up, down, and across the slough she went, desperately attempting to keep my attention from her ducklings, all ten of which instinctively swam rapidly toward shore single file, following the course of the slough beneath the willows and overhanging alders to a dark place, where they went one after another from the water into the woodland. Even then the hen was not satisfied, but continued to go up and down just beyond the trunk of a cottonwood fallen across the slough there, crying and flapping her wings until all the

warblers and sparrows thereabouts had been startled into protest, though they were not aware of what bird or creature of prey had so frightened the mallard. Yet they added their voices to hers, the while looking all about them, flying out and darting to and fro in the nervous manner of all the warblers, and the turtles on the old cottonwood dropped uncertainly into the water and vanished. But in a little while the hen went into the woods, and within five minutes, I heard her clucking her young to her, and within yet a little while longer, their voices rose to join hers, and the family came back to the slough to swim contentedly up and beyond the trestle and out of sight. Only then did I venture to go on.

Because Brewster in his *October Farm* insisted that the whippoorwill's *cluck* occurred after the first note of the cry, Hugh and I took especial trouble to listen this evening, and found nothing to justify his statement. The *cluck* invariably precedes the cry, with the only variation possible to the human ear being one which makes the *cluck* seem to follow the call when the calls are succeeding each other rapidly. The *cluck* comes so close to the first note of the call as to seem at times simultaneous, but it precedes the first note by a fraction of a second. The full range of the whippoorwill's cry is this: *quirt, quirt*—sometimes more often repeated, followed by a pause, and then: *cluck-whippoorwill, cluck-whippoorwill,* the *cluck* being inaudible unless the bird is not far away, and the *quirt* likewise.

23 JUNE: Tom Bardshaw was being officious again this morning. He had a hand in repairing sidewalks, and seemed to consider that parking in a space near by—a space he had

clearly no occasion to use—was his duty to prevent. Though he made no attempt to stop a prominent fellow-Mason from parking, he rushed out with upraised arms and generally ludicrous appearance when one of the village poor attempted later to park in that place, and came back from his busybody act looking for all the world like a rooster who had just settled the social position of a pair of hens in his yard.

29 JUNE: Someone downtown today said "once and then," a term I have never before heard; apparently it is a combination of the commoner "once in a while" and "now and then."

One of the younger Meicher boys was at a hot-dog party this evening and sat next to a child who could not finish his last hot dog. This wanton waste of good food distressed the Meicher boy, but at the same time he was aware of some fundamental rules of sanitation. After struggling with himself for some time, he said finally, "If you take off your teethbites, *I'll* eat it."

1 JULY: Fireworks began to crack in the village today. The ordinance prohibiting their firing before and after the Fourth is still on the books, but the members of the Village Board will have it that someone must make *formal complaint,* preferably in writing, before any action can be taken. This, of course, is the veriest nonsense; no one wishes to take the onus of enforcing most of the ordinances, but they will all be as one in disclaiming responsibility the instant anyone is injured through laxity in enforcing ordinances. The Board

members would doubtless have this buckpassing carried to a *reductio ad absurdum*, with "formal complaints" for everything from house-breaking to murder. Actually, the village marshal need only witness the breaking of an ordinance to take action. But, alas! too many village marshals are adepts at looking elsewhere at the wrong time for the maintenance of law and order.

The village air today was taken over by the heady linden fragrance and, in the vicinity of gardens, by the pungence of dill, now yellow with bloom. Both odors are characteristic of summer in Sac Prairie.

3 JULY: I observed this morning in the post office the great gravity of Zappy, how concerned he is about trifles of second-class mail put into his employer's box, how he invariably reads postcards, whether addressed to him or to some member of his employer's family, how he frowns and swaggers, assuming the same air of importance which characterizes his appearances at the Christmas programs at his church.

With Effie, Hildred, Orvie, and Harold down to Pulvermacher's to lunch tonight. Carl was breaking in a new girl, who was not too quick-witted and failed to understand an order for three glasses of beer, when the three of us who drank beer had had only two glasses among them; so she came back with a knowing ogle and only two more glasses. Repeated a second time, the experiment resulted similarly, with the new girl certain that no one had got ahead of her. This little comedy wore itself out presently and our attention was taken by one of Carl's patrons, somewhat under the

weather, who got up and went to the telephone, where he took down the receiver and rang, as he thought, for central. But he had his hand on an old-fashioned light button and kept putting lights on and off, failing to get any response from central. He was loudly indignant, apparently not having noticed the coincidence of the lights fluctuating, and finally walked away, muttering angrily about the service.

Because of the approaching holiday, the village tonight was more obviously awake than it usually is. Much laughter downtown because the heavy rains had undermined the highway near Spellman's Granite Works to such an extent that a truck cracked the cement and a horse and buggy completed the debacle by going down into the cavity below. The mayor, sent for, dispatched trusty Tom Bardshaw to the spot, and Tom filled the cavity in his usual fashion: that is, half way: with the result that another horse went partly into the hole when the gravel had settled. Bill accordingly sent word to the Men's Club and the Village Board that they need not order ham for the next Club supper, since they could have horse meat, the village paying for the horse. After this, amid much grumbling, the cavity was at last properly filled.

Observed late tonight at the bus station a family of German farmers bidding their youngest son good-by. The boy must have been about twenty, a docile young man. Each member of the family kissed him ceremoniously and said good-by as the bus approached, and all stood back in a tight little group as if visibly drawing away from the traveler. But the driver leaned out and called, "Full up. Next bus!" The little group flowed down and around the traveler again, and, at

the approach of the next bus, the boy was again kissed and bidden farewell by his entire family. Since this one too was crowded, and a third bus had to take him after the entire farewell procedure had been gone through yet once more, the poor lad was much kissed and handled before he got away.

4 JULY: Going down the street this evening, I saw how old Menges slept on the porch, his straw hat partly tipped over his face, his mouth wide and no teeth showing. He looked dead.

5 JULY: Mike O'Reilly held forth in the post office this morning about yesterday's picnic in Roxbury: a church affair to which all the Roxbury faithful are obliged to contribute time, food, and money. Mike called it his "old stamping ground," and made a great hullaballoo about once living there. His audience was none too receptive: old Menges, who was half asleep, as always; old Puli, who eyed Mike in proper horror every time Mike mentioned buying anything; and Mr. Crabosch, who is convinced that the Germans are the salt of the earth, and the Irish, if anything, saltpeter. But Mike cared not for their disaffection; he rambled jollily on, telling whoppers and exaggerating in the blandest manner possible, so that before he had finished it was obvious that he had convinced himself that what he said was truth. After he had gone, old Menges shook himself, opened his eyes blearily, and mouthed, "Ja, his old stamping ground—he stamped around there for years, and then they stampeded him out!"

Pausing at Kroger's this morning, I got into conversation with Arnold Hagen, on the subject of curious colloquialisms. He said he had heard someone recently say "Down the street a few," apparently instead of "a way," and was much taken with another common habit: "I first got to do this—or go there—or have this, etc." This has a clear root in the German, however, and I am familiar enough with it. But of the first, I know nothing, I have never heard it.

The village marshal directed traffic this evening at the bridge corner, with the customary negligence of the Village Board. He was ordered out into the street, and the traffic signals were left to function, so that there was great confusion, as might be expected. One of the Board members stood gravely on the curbing, pad and pencil in hand, as if to make a diagram of every delay. He need only have reached behind him and shut off the lights to settle the problem, but he did not.

8 JULY: *The Pioneer Press* carried in its "Twenty-Five Years Ago" column today: "Thirty-six tickets were sold at the depot for Madison, where Ringling Brothers Circus is showing. Early in the morning, automobiles began crossing the bridge. Bridge-tender Becker counted twenty-five in all." This was taken from the *Press* in 1912. This year no tickets were sold at the railroad station for Madison or any other place, and close to five thousand cars crossed the bridge. Such is Progress!

9 JULY: On the way downtown this morning, I saw Dexter Meise unconcernedly urinating next to the front porch of

his home. He called out to me very cheerfully and said that the air smelled nice, which indeed it did, being heavy and fragrant with the odor of freshly cut clover and of linden blossoms, among which the bees hum constantly.

10 JULY: With Bud Leinenkugel I swam today off Karberg's sandbar, the old swimming place which was always occupied years ago, but in a very short while we were driven by a sudden storm to take refuge at Karberg's, where Louis came and stood to talk with us. Noticing one of his stock clocks set at twenty minutes past eight, I asked about it. He said that all jewelers' and clock makers' samples, and even catalogue printings of clocks were set at that hour by tradition; it was the hour Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater.

Noticed today that some women in the village fancy themselves in a certain pattern of dress, as, for instance, Mrs. Ernest Kent, who likes to wear a transparent dress over a full pink underdress; a heavy, not particularly attractive woman, she wears this kind of dress usually in lavender and pink, but also in variations, on every occasion. I realized that she has worn this kind of dress so often that I have ceased to think of her as anything but transparent cloth over pink satin.

12 JULY: Because of Jo's incurable illness, I permitted my name to be put up for her office: Clerk of the Board of Education: which she will not again accept. Shortly before this evening's annual school meeting, I learned that one of the Village Board members who likes to think of himself as a

politician decided to take part in this school election by urging a friend of his to run in my place, and went so far as to have the Village Board meeting adjourned so that the Board could come up en masse and vote for his choice. Unfortunately for him, the Board did not vote en masse, despite the fulminations of another member, a conservative who has long been half dead mentally and sees red in everything that does not fit in with his ultra-reactionary point of view. The result was that I won the election handily by better than two to one, at which the Village Board rose and deserted the meeting, and the amateur politician went out like a torch.

Downtown tonight, I sat with Alice Hahn, Effie, Harold, Matt and Agnes Meise, and Ray, and heard anecdotes about Esther Sulzberg, who keeps a tavern east of Sac Prairie, and speaks with a strong accent—how today she had come into the hardware store and complained that one of her horses had died "of undigestion"; how she had called up Erne at the drugstore one day and asked, "Say, did you hab around six o'clock tree girls in your store what wanted some bancho strinks?" at which Erne was much dazed, only after some repetition gathering Esther's meaning; how she had told some boys who asked for food, with an innocently unintentional leer, that she had some good "bresst ham"; how she likes to pirouette before the mirror in Julia Lampertius' dress shop, trying on new "tresses," and talking with great admiration about her "perfegt figger."

15 JULY: A farmer in town this evening complained at the harness shop that he could get no stations east of Sac Prairie

on his radio because "the damn' wind, it blew so strong from the west, it blew them all away." He was convinced and even a little truculent. Hugh flashed a glance at me with his poker face, and I had to turn away to laugh lest he accuses me later of "spoiling a sale."

16 JULY: In the marshes tonight with Hugh and Pete, I was much taken with the fleetness of hawk moths about the wild phlox, now at their height along the railroad embankment. The moths were present in great numbers, but visited phlox almost exclusively, ignoring wild clematis, nodding lilies, vervain, the mints, and other flowers now common. At this late hour peewees, catbirds, chewinks, killdeers, wrens, vesper sparrows, and goldfinches still cried, though meadow larks and robins had grown silent before the advent of darkness. Hawk moths were constant in their attendance upon phlox all the way down to the Mid-Meadow Slough, and there I paused to write *Deilephila Lineata.*

In the dusk hour before the whippoorwill:
passes from bloom to bloom
the hawk moth, wing-shaking
wind invading this small unearthly room;
phlox, daisies, and the last wild rose—
to these his body hurtles on wings
almost opaque; fleet as any bird
he brings the day to end, he brings
the night; wing-shudder swifter than a bird,
he comes, he goes before the lips can shape a word.

17 JULY: Coming down from Upper Sac Prairie tonight, I was caught in the old magic spell of yellow lamplight in the Trautmann house on Water Street, lost in the shadows of close-pressing lilac bushes, an old mulberry tree, and gnarled oaks all around; and of pale moonlight on the old white brick chimney, the crippled roof with shadows flecked upon the shingles. I ask myself what it is that holds me about this place, and I think it must be its air of withdrawn solitude, its quiet, its aloneness—this, always, doubtless. Despite the heavy traffic passing along Water Street, the house seems pleasantly, remotely shut away. This is so by day, and it is even more sharply felt at night, with the warmth of lamplight in its windows and the pale witchfire of moonlight on its roof, and dark, silent trees all around.

Going on home, I began to think of other houses and the atmosphere of them as put down in *Evening in Spring*, and of how the sunlight on Sac Prairie's old houses is a typical aspect of summer in the village. And, proceeding thusly in my thoughts, I went on to write *Summer Afternoon: Sunlight on Old Houses.*

Sunlight leans so gently still
on these old houses, patch on patch
of shadowed light, a window-sill
of fired yellow gold to match
the sun, a patterned moss-green roof
against the arching trees, a bowered door
in deepest shade aloof
from summer's dust. Five score
of years have passed them by; they stand alone,
age held in sleepless faces
blandly turned to monotone
of sound and shade and sunlit laces
printed on their year-stained walls.
Sunlight soothes the years of their decline,
with patience calls
the decades forth and paints them, line on line.

25 JULY: Passing the Stillman house today, I saw old Mrs. Stillman on her porch, her squat body dark against the red brick wall behind her. She was talking to herself, as usual, with the familiar fixed air of attention upon something that just succeeded in eluding her mind. There was no sign that she had seen me pass, and I continued to hear her low voice for some distance up the street.

29 JULY: From my study window I saw this morning that Mrs. Jorges has given in so far to her mortal illness as to use a cane when she walks up and down the street; but even this she uses as little as possible, so great is her will to live and to do without the trappings of weakness. She must have lost much weight, for there is little of her left. She

walked very slowly this morning, her steps were uncertain, yet she struggled on, husband at her side, toward the church, perforce to work for the Sunday-school picnic to be held today in the park.

The *Press* today informed the village that the local marshal had resigned. The weekly paper puts it blandly that the marshal could not sleep by day, but the marshal himself makes no bones about saying that he could not function under the blundering of the Village Board. "Too many bosses," he says. "I can't do a thing four different ways at once, and they all think I can."

1 AUGUST: Getting ready to walk home from the hills this afternoon, I was startled by the sound of the fire bell, and at first I did not realize that it was serving in place of the siren, which apparently was not in working order. I thought instantly of the high alarm the sound used to engender in me when it rang out in the night—a peculiarly strident pealing that woke me often as a child and left me feeling terror very tangibly—and moved out to the head of the Big Hill, so that I might scan the village for any sign of smoke. There was none, but already the siren of the engine was sounding on its way north. I saw Hugh below the hill, hurrying home as if the fire were at his home, and beyond him saw the fire chief bending the oars of his rowboat in haste to get to the fire from Stony Point, where he had been fishing.

I descended to join Hugh just as the siren burst into sound with a feeble wail and genteelly expired; the bell had already ceased, and this brief burst of sound from the siren inspired the chief to greater effort still; the oars all but

snapped, the boat jerked forward to round the long bar and pass through the quiet water behind to the shore, and the last we saw of him was his coat flying from his arm as he bounded up the bank to Water Street. Satisfied that the fire was beyond the limits of the village, Hugh permitted himself to walk more leisurely. He said the siren had failed once before, for the burning of Baum's barn, which had started in a little house next to it, where children were playing with matches. The alarm had gone in at once, but so much time had been wasted in trying to get the siren to work that the barn was already flaming when the bell was resorted to. Engine and firemen finally arrived and, amid much shouting and running to and fro, reduced the flames; but to what end no one knew, since the fire had already consumed most of the barn and all the little house. Hugh said that while they were watching the flames from the canning factory, thin, long-legged, coal-begrimed Andy Baier stood with tears running down his cheeks, crying, "Oh, that nice old barn, that nice old barn!" his love for old things so great that he could not help but mourn.

2 AUGUST: This sultry day occurred one of the semiannual events for which many people in Sac Prairie still wait patiently: the arrival of the Sears-Roebuck catalogues—no longer carried downtown from the railroad station in one load after another by one-armed Beau Wardler, but brought now by a special truck from Madison. The catalogues came today just before the evening papers arrived, and the unloading had therefore an appreciative audience. The postmaster began to distribute them at once, and many were the quips passed to and fro among the audience. When-

ever duplication occurred, the recipient was quick to remark that he had got one for the house, "and one for the little house."

7 AUGUST: A torrid day, with the temperature 105 degrees in the shade. This morning I went to Ehl's to buy some honey in comb and pail. Peter was at making rugs in the cool cellar room, and I stood watching him while Mrs. Ehl got the honey for me. He complained that the year was a poor one for honey, because the bees were not going out as usual, and presently took me to the hives to show me how they clustered there, only a few of them coming and going.

8 AUGUST: Waiting for Hugh to find some fishing tackle this evening, I sat for a while in his "office"—the room into which Hugh moved from the other, older shed along the back street behind the harness shop, the old room where we bartered stamps, sheets about ghosts from the sensational journals of the Sunday papers, comics, and postcards. The cozy room is as musty with age as the harness shop itself is, and its atmosphere is soothing and pleasant with the strength of many old things and many memories. Fly rods and fishing tackle, sporting prints, old magazines, books, a box of flies, some fishing catalogues, two tables, a rocking chair, and one straight-backed chair: these things take up the small space. But neither of us stayed there long, the room being warm in contrast to the fresh, rain-washed air outside.

9 AUGUST: Chickens, said mother this morning, watching them roll and scratch in a dry, dusty place untouched by

yesterday's rain, *"wuhl"* in the dirt. I could not learn the origin of this word, which may be *"vuhl"* or *"wool,"* but recalled having heard it before.

10 AUGUST: Mrs. Pellen died last night. Today Mr. Pellen went downtown at his usual time, returning home to sit on the bench out behind his house reading the paper, as always, the day for him apparently no different from any other. I wondered what thoughts coursed through his mind in the doing of these ordinary tasks, which no longer had across them the shadow of the wife with whom he had lived more than fifty years. Or had he come in the two months of her illness to accept the imminence of her death to such an extent that its coming no longer meant anything to him? Or lived he so much by habit that even death could not change his routine? In some ways, he is strange; short of speech, not without a sense of humor, he leaves one with the impression that he would be difficult to know. He has small eyes, and they are foxy. His white moustache and rosy cheeks belie his eyes. He never fails to return a greeting, but says nothing more, passing on his way with his paper or his groceries, as he has done for the past few years, ever since he moved into Sac Prairie, and I know no more of him today than I did then, save what people say: that he likes children, that he would have preferred living in Upper Sac Prairie to be nearer his church.

At the canning factory today, said Hugh, Andy had said confidently that it would rain. "How do you know?" asked Hugh. "The air feels wet," replied Andy, putting out a hand and rubbing his fingers together as if feeling the air. As we

sat on the harness shop stoop discussing Andy's vagaries, Pete came by and paused to tell several tales which confirmed my belief that the local ball park has become the graveyard of the new generation's chastity. The Park Hall had at one time been the place, and even now sometimes late at night I pass an occasional couple in dark places, lying still as can be, but not overcoming the unfamiliar darkness of them wherever they are; and before that, Lover's Lane, for those who had cars. For these, said Pete, it was now Henn's Point, where there are more trees.

11 AUGUST: Dexter Meise sat in von Wald's Restaurant this morning looking wistfully at all the things he would like to eat. When the clerk asked him what he wanted, he said quietly, "a glass of water," which she gave him. I asked him whether he would like an ice-cream cone. He nodded, his eyes grew bigger, but when I told the clerk to give him one, he was simply astounded; he could not believe this had happened to him; he could not answer, but sat and looked at me when the clerk asked him which flavor he wanted as if awaiting my further word before daring to believe in his good fortune. But he was convinced at last; he took the cone and fled lest some further magic remove it again from his grasp.

I went down to grandfather Derleth's place in his absence and ate a few of his early apples, standing under the tree which, alas! is now slowly, inexorably dying, though it still bears and the fruit is succulent and very palatable as always: yellow-green with red stripes and good solid flesh. While I stood there remembering how often I had filled my

pockets with these apples on my way downtown for grandfather's mail, Slim Snow came around the house from where he had been cleaning up, running gawkily, his long legs hindering rather than furthering his speed. Seeing me, his face cleared, and he explained that he had thought it was some of "them damn' kids again." Last week, he went on, one of the Meicher children had come in and knocked down some apples. He had rapped him smartly "acrost the ass" with a rake handle, to no end, since the boy dropped none of the apples. Another time, he said, he had "nearly ketched 'em. They was two, and I tried t' run after 'em both the same time." Slim explained that children nowadays were much worse than they had been in his day. I did not take issue with him, though I doubt very much whether children are ever any worse in one generation than in the next. There are always mischievous ones, always bullies, always runaways, always petty thieves—apple-stealers, melon-cooners, among any group of village children; just as there are always young anglers, baseball players, marble champions, and hunters, who with their BB guns in pursuit of any bird at all never fail to annoy me. *Und so weiter,* as grandfather might say.

15 AUGUST: Walking with Hugh from Upper Sac Prairie along Water Street, my attention was drawn to a large revival tent, its flaps up from the ground because of the heat, and we stood for a few moments viewing the spectacle from the sidewalk. The evangelist was exhorting the audience in his best, most violent manner, but, as far as we could determine, the prospective converts were not impressed. One local girl sat on the platform, apparently one of the saved,

already well "washed in the blood of the Lamb," and her brother, himself a frustrated evangelist well known to both Hugh and me, stood near by, seemingly serving as usher. Hugh was somewhat apprehensive lest he see us and come rushing out to drag us in, intent upon "bringing us to Jesus," but, fortunately, he was too immersed in the exhortations from the platform, and we escaped the blessings of revival salvation.

On the way to the marsh late tonight with Ray, he told me about having had occasion to call upon old Mrs. Snow. The house inside, he said, was unimaginable: the walls apparently not having been cleaned since the house was put up more than six decades ago, chickens in the kitchen, together with a woodpile, chips, and an ax on the kitchen floor. Washtubs were kept in the front room, and Mrs. Snow herself was barefooted. As he was about to go, he saw sleeping in one corner a pig. The simple life.

18 AUGUST: Cousin Kate, at the house tonight for supper, had a tale of woe to tell, a tragedy of the first water for her. "I can't pray no longer," she said, "with my false teeth. Every time I get going good, my teeth fall out."

20 AUGUST: The ground-cherry season is on in the village, and from time to time I encounter the fragrance of ground cherries being cooked. I walked around to grandfather Derleth's place to see whether any were there, but all were gone. I could remember this evening with actual physical pleasure the sweetness of grandmother Derleth's ground-cherry jam and syrup on bread, when often I stopped of an

evening on the way home from town with the paper for them, and sat at table to eat bread and ground cherries and black coffee with them—the only place I ever enjoyed black coffee. The sight of ground cherries lying in gardens today brought this past time back, evening being especially time for remembering, all years past and present lingering with the last of day in afterglow.

21 AUGUST: I walked leisurely down into the marshes this evening, watching the swifts and martins coursing in great flocks along the river and over the face of the rising moon near the pickle factory, where workers were still busy, though the canning factory had completed its run of corn for the day. At the far end of the west channel bridge, I paused to talk with Bob—who camps on Bergen's Island between jobs, taking a job until he has enough money to camp again and then leaving it. He said that fishing, in which he delights, was bad, and was disturbed about it. "You know, they tell me you write stories," he said incredulously. "I'd never a thought it, no sir. Now, I got me a nephew who's a painter, he paints pitchers. He studied in Paris, and maybe *you* wouldn't believe that," he finished, laughing. I thought it interesting in its contrast to Bob's way of life, but instantly reflected that perhaps at bottom the two were not dissimilar.

I went on along the embankment, listening to nighthawks calling and sky-coasting over the low Ganser Hills east of the Upper Meadow, and crossed by the lane opposite the Triangle to the Mazomanie road, where the cornfields were beautiful with moonlight silver on their leaves, and their fertile fragrance rising on the light wind. Before turning

homeward, I paused at the pasture gate and wrote *Sweet in Air, the Corn at Evening.*

Midsummer night, midsummer dark,
where hours past the meadow lark
sang to the sinking sun, and now,
beneath the bough of maple, bough
of oak and under butternut, the corn bloom
sweetens air, lies in the night's dark room
intangibly, lies at the roadside where
soon goldenrod and aster flower, where
balmony and rue and dodder all, all
make the signature of fall.

Among the rows the field mice wait,
the corn leaves rustle late
at night with no wind there,
no creature's breath to stir the air.
Cool air, chill nights, late summer air:
where coasting nighthawks cry, where
crickets, katydids, and marsh wrens sing
and slopes of summer bring
the pungent smoke of autumn: there
in the corn-sweet air, there
in the mystery of night,
while still the fugitives of spring are bright
in memory, the corn leaves' windy sound
is voice of Indians fading, voice of pioneers to west-
ward, and the ground
shudders, trembles in the dark with footfalls' echo,
sound retreating, far and faint, slowly, slow . . .

Sweeter than lilac, sweeter than rose,
the corn stands high and blossoms now, rows
and field, fields and slope, slopes and prairie where
the corn,
sweet as honeysuckle sweetens night, corn
spreads fragrance in the hush of dark, the night,
into the shadowed deeps where never bright
of sun will come; flowers tremble in the windless air,
spreading perfume down the summer's stair,
bending and swaying in the day, in the bright,
bright sun and evening air,
bending and swaying in the night,
sweet, sweet at evening, sweet in air . . .

Passing the Ganser Hills not long after, I stopped to watch the moon rise among the tree trunks along the slopes of Whippoorwill Hollow. When it came up, its light, in contrast to the darkness there, was almost blinding, so that nothing could be seen but dark trees above, dark earth beneath, and the moon's brilliance; but presently, as it rose a little further, grass, fence, fallen leaves—all emerged in a kind of magic light, a witching fire laid by the moon, and I felt enclosed in a place all my own, a shell of summer night, with only this singular, ever-changing beauty; and from this, it required a physical effort to turn at last and pursue my way back to Sac Prairie.

22 AUGUST: I sat this morning for some time in the railroad station office talking with Fred Sprattler, soon to be retired. He was reluctant to go, not quite knowing what he would do with himself now, though, he said, his pension would

keep him. The atmosphere of the old office has changed not a whit from my first memory of it at the age of nine. With its high ceiling, it stays comparatively cool, even in midsummer, and air passing into it from the long dark freight room helps keep it cool. The racks of folders, receipts, a few express packages, the old chairs, the windows looking out upon the tracks, but chiefly the constant clicking of the telegraph key, present always as a kind of undercurrent: these make up the atmosphere of the place, as it has always been. Fred talked about trains and trainmen, saying that I ought to do some railroad stories. "There's romance for you," he said. I agreed, and took pleasure in hearing his anecdotes, and as much delight in his animation, his infectious smile, his bright eyes.

23 AUGUST: Abner Lodell came into the drugstore today and said he had got married. His face was matchless for its dolefulness, and his whole manner was so despondent that Carl could not help asking him why he felt so bad about it. "Well," he said, sighing helplessly, "my brudder took her out, but she says I done it; so I married her." He did not apparently think it possible to escape an obligation justly his brother's. "I always got to do his washin' for him," he said, and went out, muttering.

24 AUGUST: Mrs. Carliner told me this morning, when I commented on the Johnny-jump-ups blooming among her lilies, that young John Becker had come over a few days ago and had seen them also, and she had asked, "Don't you hear anything, John?" The child listened vainly, until Mrs. Carliner said, "'Good morning, John,' says Johnny-jump-up."

Next morning she heard John outside; he came up the walk, went over to the flower, said "Good morning, Johnny-jump-up," and gravely departed. On the following morning he was back with two young companions. "There's something here that talks," he said. But the boys, alas! had no magic in them; they heard nothing, and when John went off with them at last, he was obviously in high scorn. He came back, said Mrs. Carliner, several times subsequently to wish the blossom a very formal good morning.

In a store this morning I overheard two farm women meeting each other. "Every time I'm in town, you are," said one. "We must be regular road-loafers," replied the other. *Road-loafer* is doubtless the country equivalent for the village's *street-chaser.*

In the darkness over Bergen's Island and on the trestle over the east channel of the Wisconsin, I stood tonight to pick out of the darkness a multitude of smells I might not have known in the afterglow: the smell of wet river sand, of the water itself, of old wood exposed by the falling water-level, of bridge timbers and cinders; and of sounds: rustling in the grasses, insects humming past, frogs jumping off the embankment, bird cheepings, crickets, katydids. And along the embankment beyond rose the sweetness of Joe-Pye weed, the heady fragrance of the parasitic dodder clinging to helianthus stalks, the rich miasma of the Spring Slough and the meadow. Mallards worked in the water there, a muskrat plunged in and away, and a slithering in the grass may have been a snake. The senses seem to be more alert in darkness.

I went on down the embankment, and in the night's mysterious dark-light, heard the brook's voice: a faint murmuring, magnified in the darkness, and the rustling of grasses and leaves where water passed, the quick running patter of a bird along the brook's edge—possibly a solitary sandpiper—the guttural croaking of bullfrogs, and on Lenson's Meadow saw a few fireflies still. Coming opposite the cornfields along the Mazomanie road, I met the rich, sweet odor of the corn and, crossing the pasture gate, went down the lane toward it, and stood among it to watch the moon, orange and waning now, push up in the east. The landscape was quiet and still, the moon's light all, save for the stars and the distant yellow lights of lamps in farm windows along the hills and up at Lenson's. There was no bird's sound, save on occasion the wild cry of a killdeer, though nighthawks flew all around, voiceless in their endless pur-

suit of food on the wing. In the cornfields the leaves rustled and murmured without ceasing.

25 AUGUST: Taking a short cut through the park on the way to town, I saw that Bill Henning had got around to the south wall of the Park Hall in his painting, and I knew that I must walk quietly and swiftly past, lest the garrulous old soul see me and go on without end about painting. But, alas! for all my would-be stealth, he saw me, turned on his ladder, and shouted, "How d'you like it?" I opined that it was all right. He was at the moment just finishing the small window squares below the gable. "Those are the little devils!" he said, speaking of them as if they were alive. "And that gable!"—with its scalloped design in the siding. I got away at last, remembering with some amusement the time he had been painting at Harold's and, in keeping with the usual habit of painters in disparaging the work of their predecessors, had pointed out to Harold the frightful job of painting done on Harold's screens, to all of which Harold listened patiently before saying with icy calm, "I didn't think they were that bad when I painted them."

26 AUGUST: I heard in the post office today that familiar local expression *all up* for *distributed:* "Is the mail all up?" and again: "Is the mail busted?" which was once far more current. Its genesis is not clear. All up in the boxes, perhaps?

Peter Ehl this morning worked at his loom, making a rag rug of a lovely deep blue color. It was cool there in the cellar, though sunlight entered among shadows through windows set in the deep east wall, where the slope permits

the windows to be full length, while the opposite wall is deep in the earth. He did not hurry about his work, but paused every little while to talk. He complained about the catbirds in his grapes, saying they ate far too much fruit. Worse than robins, he said. I remarked that they were great insect eaters also. He seemed skeptical. Mrs. Ehl came and sat down, elfinlike, with her brown bird-eyes alert and crinkling in gaiety. She said that Mr. Ehl was making a rug for some people in Oregon; did I know where that was? I assured them I did. There followed some discussion of rug-making, Mrs. Ehl bringing out rugs they had made, all well woven, well warped, strong and durable. "You can't buy rugs like that," she said. From this subject, we went on to smoking, especially by women. I confessed that I did not like to see women smoke, but had no active prejudice against the habit, though I myself did not indulge. From smoking to drinking was but a step, and only half a step more to a glass of wine, grape, by the flavor of it, and a little too sweet for my tongue, though palatable enough. He was proud to declare it three years old, and when I mentioned that father had some dandelion wine twenty years old, he said reluctantly that, of course, dandelion wine was not really *wine*. I rose to go presently but had yet to look at the grapes hanging full. Both of them bade me a pleasant good-by. "*Mach's gut, komm wieder,*" they said together.

28 AUGUST: Seated at supper table this evening, I was astonished to hear the family discussing with great gravity the magic powers of the *Seventh Book of Moses*, mother expressing her belief that there was something in it. Father

spun a yarn of how a farmer, having had recourse to the *Seventh Book*, came out with a shotgun and mowed down an entire row of crows: two bushel-baskets full: with one shot. Mother added a tale of a sick woman with a sore throat to whom the doctor supposedly said that her sore throat was the result of witchcraft, that only due consultation of the *Seventh Book* would cure her, for he, alas! could not. So presently mother told again the oldest of them all, told in its time by grandmother Volk—It appeared that at a certain time a child in Baraboo had been afflicted with lice brought on by witchcraft. A consultation of the *Seventh Book* caused the mother of the afflicted child to take three lice from the child's head, burn them in the stove with appropriate chanting and abracadabra over each one, whereupon a malicious old woman in the neighborhood took sick, developed a fever, and was literally burned to death! Could not contain myself any longer, but let out whoops of laughter and went to talk to grandmother to learn whether or not she still clings to her belief in the *Seventh Book* as in dreams. Certainly she did. I observed while talking to her that she habitually uses *without* in place of *unless*—"I won't close the door, without it gets too cold."

31 AUGUST: Going downtown between 6:45 and 7, the dusk as in April, last light fading down the west, I heard the sad complaint of a screech owl in the park, the rattle of dishes, forks, knives, a woman singing *Memory Lane* to herself in her kitchen, children's voices raised in a last outburst of play before being called for bed; I caught the smell of grass smoke in air, dryness, dustiness, and at last saw the

streetlights flowering into the western sky against the afterglow—a typical August evening in Sac Prairie.

4 SEPTEMBER: Abner Lodell passed me today in his car while I was walking up the meadow road. It was the first time I had seen him since his unfortunate marriage, performed to satisfy his older brother's obligation, and he waved with such abandon that he had to engage in violent gymnastics to keep his car from mounting a tree at the roadside.

6 SEPTEMBER: I took note tonight on the way to Upper Sac Prairie of the whistles and cries children use to signal each other in the growing darkness: sometimes a mock-Tarzan cry, suggestive enough of the jungle, and sometimes a weird, broken *oo-oo-oo,* in a high, shrill voice, meant to imitate an Indian's whoop. From this, went on to a consideration of common nicknames; these have great variety—Dutchy, Pickles, Butch, Froly, Tubby, Dink, Ick, Pinky, Bud, Shadow, Ibbles, Quack, Dizzy, Shimmel, Prince, Peanuts, Cobs, Ducks, Peck, Red, Nooker, Nikki, Slim, Skinny, Jettyx, Duke, Pipe, Fat, Shorty, Hippo—and their genesis is, by and large, simple enough. In no case do they have any relation to the individual's real name, but rather to some aspect of his person or manner. Thus, Butch is a tough guy, ready to fight; Dutchy has a German accent; Stub and Shorty are both short; Red has red hair; Tubby, Fat, and Hippo are heavy; Slim is tall and thin; Skinny was at one time thin; Pickles likes pickles; Pipe once became violently ill after smoking a pipe; Duke puts on airs. Of the others, nothing is known. Froly says that the girls gave him his nickname. "I don't know what it means. Do you?"

7 SEPTEMBER: Grandfather Derleth was up to dinner today and complained of two teeth which, he said, were "loose as a cow's tail in flytime." Crossing the bottoms today toward Lovers' Lane on the way back from an afternoon over the hills, I was surprised to catch sight of a small hog-nosed snake, scarcely more than a foot in length, which made no effort to escape, and did not simulate the appearance of death in its usual manner. Examining it closely, I saw that its belly was somewhat distended, and picked it up to probe it gently, discovering that it had swallowed a small toad or frog not long ago, this accounting for its sluggishness in the face of possible danger. I put the snake down and started away, when its subsequent activity held my attention. Apparently alarmed by my handling, the hog-nosed snake proceeded to unhinge its jaws and lay with its mouth widely distended, contracting its body from the tail up until a small toad was regurgitated. Thereupon the snake distended its head, seemingly not hinging its jaws again, and immediately turned upon its back in the familiar 'possum defense. I examined the toad, but it had been dead for some time, indicating that the snake had swallowed it several hours before. Turning the snake over resulted in its obstinate insistence upon appearing dead. I took myself off to Lovers' Lane and stood there watching the hog-nosed snake through my binoculars. For fully two minutes it continued to lie on its back, unmoving; then it cautiously closed its mouth and turned its head right side up so that it could look around. Then for a minute more it was still, after which it slowly and cautiously righted itself and glided back to the toad, which it was preparing to swallow again when I took my leave.

9 SEPTEMBER: Sitting for a while with grandfather Derleth today, I listened to him tell how boys went nutting in his youth, particularly after hazel nuts. "On Saturdays we went pretty far out, sometimes four, five miles," he said. "There were five of us, usually, and each one of us filled a wheat sack with nuts. Sometimes we carried them home, but once in a while we took along a wagon with Ed Schlegemüllig's dog, Dacksy, hitched to it. After school we went out into the woods closer to town. When we were gone all day, we took along a small sack of dried bread to munch on while we worked. We could always get water at the farmhouses. The dog learned quick when he was hauling the wagon; sometimes, when he was thirsty, he sat down at the gate to a farm and wouldn't budge until someone brought him water. When we got home with them, we used to hang the sacks of nuts in the loft over the kitchen, and brother John, who wouldn't gather nuts, slyly worked a hole into the sacks and filled his pockets. Oh, he was a mean one, that John! There were some places where we couldn't pick nuts—on the Roerich farm. He had plenty of hickory trees, too; so we fixed him. Two of us went along the rail fence south of the grove where he could see us, and watch us, and the rest snuck in from the north and picked all the nuts we wanted. They'd let us know they were through by whistling like birds. Roerich never caught on."

10 SEPTEMBER: I was amused today by the small antics of Marilyn Madison, who is in the habit of speaking of herself in the third person—"She's in her sun-suit. She's going to Chicago tomorrow." Not long ago, said her father, they

had visited at the Lueders' country place, where they had found Miss Charlotte at work in the garden, clad, as usual, in an old-fashioned, large bonnet. Marilyn went up to her, gazed at her for a long moment in silence, and then asked, "Is that Old Dutch Cleanser?" Miss Charlotte, almost totally deaf now, did not hear. When the child subsequently spoke to her, said Jim, she addressed Miss Charlotte gravely and consistently as Old Dutch Cleanser.

15 SEPTEMBER: Billy Ynand has written his autobiography, and showed me a copy of it today. He has entitled it *Not Written in a Trance,* and explained that the idea for it had come to him while he was on a train either en route to or returning from Chicago, I was not exactly clear which. He starts provocatively enough: "I am a failure, but our Lord Jesus Christ is not, in Whose name I write. To Chicago and back again. I left my old home town, Sac Prairie, Wisconsin, on Sept. 3d, to revisit Chicago once more, and the fare you well was by my old Teacher, Mrs. Mary Atwood, who taught me no more than the Figure she believed in most heartily, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Her question: Where are you going, Willie? I am going to Chicago once more, the Lord willing." And he goes on to tell about his experiences and the sights of Chicago, chiefly evangelistic, and ends, after several pages: "I conclude with your and my confession of Faith short and sweet: the whole Bible in its shortest form. Amen. I trust in God, Glory Glory to God *All* Thru the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Yours, Billy Ynand. Otherwise accept me as Billy Hopinka, The Sky Pilot."

16 SEPTEMBER: Grandfather said this morning that old man Petterlee had had a grape arbor at his home on the factory street, and used to rise at every sound and come out in his nightgown with a lantern to see whether he could catch the boys stealing his grapes. He was a gentle soul, with a good sense of humor; he knew well how the boys fooled him, for they followed him and his lantern, picking grapes as they went, and when he turned to go back to his house, they called: "Good night, Petterlee!" whereupon he always smiled and answered gently, "Good night, boys."

17 SEPTEMBER: With Hugh up along the Mazomanie road tonight, I stood watching the beautiful moonlight move down the slopes, its light gliding from grass to fallen leaves, from stump to drying weeds like something alive. By moonlight I wrote *Hunter's Moon.*

Over the rim of hill and down the slope,
soft on the stump where the chipmunk sleeps,
soft on fence-rails, weeds, the pungent fallen leaves,
still as fox feet passing in the wood, the moonlight
creeps.
Over the hill in a haze of smoke,
pale yellow, orange, the moon comes up,
hangs in the hollow where not long before
the blossoms sweetened air: bloodroot, daisy, buttercup.
Still in the quiet wood, quiet as dusk,
the moonlight falls, the moonlight creeps,
among the grasses makes its magic where
shadowed boles and last leaves lie. The katydid keeps
at last his summer melody; the cricket, too, is done;
but the fox is out, with moonlight creeps

from his lair to the rabbit trail,
yawps from the hill where the meadow sweeps
to deeper wood beyond. The 'possum stirs
and wanders far; and in his tree the coon
smells on the air the bitterness of frost.
Over the hill, over Aldebaran, the moon
comes shouldering dusk; the moonlight falls
athwart the slope, along the fence, fleet
in cornshocks, in spent bloom, soundless,
still as in the leaves the vixen's feet.

18 SEPTEMBER: On Juniper Bluff this afternoon with Hugh, I discovered the fragments of the nighthawk's eggs found this spring on a hike with Karl. The broken shells lay approximately where the eggs had been. They were extremely thin, paper thin, crumbling at a touch. Made melancholy by the hazy, smoky day, the signature of summer's end, and the wind's foretaste of winter, I put down a *Dirge for the Second Season.*

Broken:

the speckled egg,
thin, mottled shell,
brother to stone:
the nighthawk gone
with the year flown.
By the same stones, the same sun,
the same leaves companioned;
where egg lay in April,
where young bird was in May:
the broken shell.

Summer done,
May day and nighthawk cry
from stony hill no more:

year done,
where bird once was,
where once the nighthawk
zoomed and cried;
October and a broken shell,
shell broken, summer's broken knell,
the unleafed last tree behind,
like a closed door—

above, the winter sky,
about, the winter wind,
and winter, winter, winter before.

22 SEPTEMBER: The children still run, as always, after Sam Schroeder and his ice truck for small pieces of ice upon which to suck, as children have done in Sac Prairie for as long as I can remember. Sam generously hands out ice, and the children scatter, clutching the cold fragments.

23 SEPTEMBER: Alice Hahn said this evening that at one time her son John, answering the door when she was painfully ill, found a salesman there. In his earnest desire to be rid of the salesman, he sought to convince him of his mother's illness, and said, "My ma's got a hexaschusz in the back. Come in and look at her!" and led the salesman directly to where his mother lay.

26 SEPTEMBER: On Breunig's Hill this afternoon I came upon an exceedingly large spider, *Miranda surantia,* I think, in her web among the wheat stubble. I paused and observed that it had apparently just finished feeding upon a grasshopper, which it had wound about with silk, and saw below the nest, already discarded, two recently devoured grasshoppers and the skeletal remains of others. The spider's belly was distended with eggs. It was aware of my attention, but was not disturbed and refused to be disturbed, for, when I touched it gently, it began deliberately to sway its web, something I had never before seen, and about which I was dubious even then until it was verified beyond question. I had thought at first that my touching the spider had set off the web's swaying, but this was not true, for I subsequently made several attempts to create the swinging motion myself, but failed; and, when I brought the spider and her web to pause with infinite care, I saw the spider's hind legs immediately set up the swaying motion again, and soon the web was swinging back and forth as before.

29 SEPTEMBER: On the way home from town this evening, I paused to talk with old Mrs. Hantselmann, who was pulling away the long grass beside the board walk leading to her front porch from the old board fence shutting her property away from the street. She looked very tired, with the same distant, meditative look in her eyes, and her eyes themselves seemed more pale than ever before. She said she was not well. "Here a knot, and there a pain—*immer so.* But I'm getting old, I've got to expect it." She said she was eighty-six last April 15, and spoke now as if she sensed an end coming. "I wasn't near so good this year helping Gus get down

the grapes. I used to be able to climb the ladder like nothing with baskets and pails of grapes. But there's too much work." She stood looking a little while to westward, a faint longing in her eyes, and presently spoke of the necessity of rain. I left her standing there, but before I had gone very far, she had turned back to her work.

3 OCTOBER: For the first time in this season, I was conscious today in the village of the fragrance of leaves, the definite autumn odors rising from fallen leaves, noticing this particularly about soft maple foliage, the dry and decaying leaves of which have a soft, cloying sweetness, in contrast to the smoke-pungence of oak leaves a little later. These two: maple and oak: among common trees in Sac Prairie have the strongest, most easily identified odor. In the woods nothing is stronger than the sycamore's amazing, smoky odor or the prickly ash's minty fragrance. Acorns crack underfoot today, and make a hollow sound striking roofs as they fall.

I spent the afternoon in the marshes, walking slowly down the railroad tracks. The evidence of autumn was everywhere today—Virginia creeper a bright red, with scarlet, crimson, maroon in its foliage; poison ivy pale pink, mottled and yellow red; maples, elms, birch, poplars, cottonwoods, and willows all shedding yellow leaves; the common sumac burning vermilion: and against this brightness, the wayside color of berries, hanging heavy still—dark blue wild grapes, black-blue bunches of carrion berries and Virginia creeper, black berries of the sweet elder, the last of silky cornel's pale blue berries, the fruit of asparagus hanging redly among its feath-

ery branches, now yellowing and browning, maroon smooth sumac fruit, the round-leaf greenbriar's dark blue berries, the unbroken sheaths of orange bittersweet, the green-white berries of poison ivy, the heavy pendant fruit of the true Solomon's Seal in single rows along the underside of stems, the red to purple cluster of berries atop the false spikenard, the cerise fruit of the wahoo or spindle tree.

Leaves today: golden, green, brown, rose, maroon: lay upon the still, unmoving surfaces of ponds and sloughs, with the afternoon sunlight falling athwart the water and the colorful woods beyond; and a great blue heron stood one-legged on the edge of the Spring Slough, the epitome of autumn.

5 OCTOBER: I heard today that young David Bachhuber, having a boil on each leg, is positive they come from kneeling too much at Mass. He avers also that the priest says during the service, "Dominus baseball," and, "Calling all cars!"—this his interpretation of the Latin he does not understand. However, Teddy Williams' break remains to me the most classic. Seen one day gazing intently at a crucifix in church, he was asked by the priest what Christ died of. Without hesitation, Teddy replied: "From eating too much sweet corn."

10 OCTOBER: At breakfast this morning father mentioned that it was the local custom up to about thirty years ago to pay a bell-ringer to toll for a death, funeral, or wedding, the usual emolument being fifty cents. The custom was apparently observed here for many decades and only died out after the turn of the century.

At four this afternoon, I accompanied Hugh over the river and along the hills to Stony Point, where Hugh wanted to fish. Along the bottoms opposite Otto's Island a small flock —a dozen or so—of killdeer flew up, curved, and went south, contrary to their custom of circling back into the hills. Doubtless a migratory flock. Just beyond the wing dam on the sidehill there, we came upon evidence of much digging at the base of a gooseberry bush, and saw among the earth the remains of bee combs, obviously dug from the ground there, possibly by a woodchuck or skunk. Wright's Valley was filled with chewinks, silent save for their characteristic cheeping in the underbrush; they were constantly in motion, as were a small flock of myrtle warblers in the willows at the fence there. Over the hill Hugh led the way, past the smoky pungence of the sycamore leaves, some of which I took to carry home so that I might have their unusual fragrance near my desk. At Karl's Point, the willow smell rose very strongly, the earth yet damp after the morning's heavy fog and little rain, and the shrubbery was alive with birds, a large flock of blackpoll warblers in autumn plumage being particularly in evidence, and quite fearless, flying very close to me several times. I watched them feed, apparently on some insect parasite of the cottonwood tree, and then mounted the slope to sit among the profusely blooming wild asters, lavender and purple in the grass.

There I sat contemplating sky and cloud and bird until I heard Hugh's signal for return, and descended to join him. Back in the valley once more, Hugh took an apple from Gus Pillep's woodland tree, and worked on it a while; the fruit was as hard as ever, almost impossible to get down. In the western sky a dark cloud crossed the sun, and its out-

lines glowed with the sunlight behind it like white gold, shimmering and gleaming, almost unbearable to look upon, like the body of the sun itself. Colors held the west: yellow, lemon, copper, amethyst, and saffron, changing rapidly to sienna; the sun's rays came from behind the cloud like beacons, and dark light clouded up from the bank's edge. But presently the sun shone again, low over the hills, not long from setting, and the air was filled with killdeer and cricket song, and midges danced by thousands in the pale haze of old rose glowing over the land.

11 OCTOBER: Alfred Wilton, out to hunt ducks in the bottoms, sat in a duck blind and shot a mallard flying over. He shot also at a second, but failed to shoot at a third passing equally advantageously overhead. Across the slough, his companions wondered why he failed to shoot at a second flight coming over subsequently, and became alarmed when a third flight of ducks failed to bring any shot from him. They went over and found him dead. The first mallard, hurtling downward, had struck him on the back of the head and broken his neck.

In the marshes this evening with Hugh, heard a solitary cricket frog near the Ice Slough. Already the frogs are moving inland, making ready for winter. Standing there to listen, we heard also the distant nostalgic whistle of a steam engine sounding from the prairie west of river and village. The smell of corn leaves lay in clouds here and there along the railroad. At the pasture gate across from the Lower Meadow, we stood to hear a fox yawp; he called three times, in cries to the number of six or seven each time, a strange,

sometimes eerie sound; but after three rounds of cries, he was silent. With his voice still echoing in ear, I put down *Fox at the Pasture Gate.*

Freed from the bright surveillance of noon,
at meadow's edge, the secret fox
sits to watch the rising moon,
while heedlessly the hawkmoths fly
among the phlox.

In the yellow moon-mist where
the woods begin, all earth is still;
the fox sits quietly,
takes hay-sweet air,
sits and contemplates how

a rustle mercilessly in the grass may
presently betray
come from his house
a mouse in minute industry.

And dimly hears the cricket's endless rune
while at the pasture gate the moon
makes magic, and first wind rattles
the pod-bound seed.
He sits to wait
for wind to bring down mellow meadow air
the pungence of a stoat or careless hare
to satisfy his ambuscaded cunning and
his greed.

13 OCTOBER: Last night occurred the heaviest frost of the year thus far, a "killing" or "black" frost; and this morning the leaves of the hackberry trees are coming down like rain, a melancholy sight in the windless air—the still, inevitable descent of the leaves—walks, roads, lawns, and bushes hidden beneath a carpet of yellow and curling green leaves. Already at eight o'clock several of the hackberry trees stood bare of leaves, the sky's blue showing coldly through. The day is clear and bright, but the rime of frost lingers wherever sunlight has not fallen—down among the long grasses, the alfalfa and clover, among the west ridge of stems in the garden, behind trees and walls, the frost stays whitely. In some places leaves lie almost knee-deep, and all air is heavy with the fragrance of their death.

14 OCTOBER: Hugh and I made the first of the season's trips around Bergen's Island this afternoon, going down the west shore to curve around the point and come up the east. Bob had left the island, bag and baggage, though he had forgotten a jacket and some cooking utensils which he could not carry freely. Many woodcock rose up from time to time, with loud protests, to fly whistling away into deeper underbrush. The path was overgrown with prickly ash and poison ivy, which we cut laboriously away to reach the southern tip of the island, where, as always, the feeling of wilderness isolation came over me at sight of the deep woods on the opposite shore of the river, just north of which in fictional fancy the Pierneau Hill rises, and the sunlight on the wide sandy shore of the island at that point where the east channel rejoins the west, and the Wisconsin flows on more widely than before. Woods, river, bars, islands, flats, and hills all around: no sign of human habitation save for the worn old cabin down the Point, so that the island here gives me always the strange restlessness of a Huckleberry Finn, bent on exploration.

Warmth lay along the east shore, up which Hugh led the way swiftly to Dead Dog Hole, where he found a paper wasp nest hanging from the bushes over the water and, near by, a trap lodged in a tree in such a fashion that it was easy to suppose a large bird may have freed himself from it some time ago—last spring perhaps, or winter, for the trap was broken and rusted and old. The day was still: a little bluebird song came chortling from the sky, a goldfinch called on wing, chickadees cried, and robins in the underbrush made querulous notes. In an hour we were back once more at the bridge.

15 OCTOBER: Calling on Irene at her grandmother's house, I was much interested in an old well icebox: a tall hood of wood with a windlass and chain inside, at the end of the chain a metal box which contained butter, cream, eggs, and other perishable food. This was lowered into the well in the heat of summer—a home-made icebox common many years ago on farm and village places alike, though most of them are long since gone. The chain is wound up and down, Irene said, and only the incautious use a rope. Their neighbors used a rope, she remembered, and it broke occasionally, with the result that Mrs. Reppola upbraided the old man lustily while both of them fished around in the well for the metal box before they could have breakfast. My attention was drawn, too, to an old cuckoo clock on the wall of the dining room: a bird supposed to be a whippoorwill (though what benighted soul so named it no one knows) calls out the quarters, and the clock strikes in a major tone at the same time; the cuckoo appears only to mark the hours, while the clock strikes in a deep minor tone. At the hour the "whippoorwill" first has its say, the clock strikes four quarters, and then the cuckoo appears and the hour sounds.

While I sat on the east river trestle this afternoon I was disturbed by footsteps trembling along from the east, and was presently greeted by Jed Kroll, who stood to talk a while. He said he had come down through the bottoms much the same way I had come, and had been noticing how the redwings still sang, and the bluebirds and robins, and how the barred owls called in the dark woods. Looking

down the river, he said, "First time I come down the Wisconsin was years ago, when I was sixteen. Me and my brother—he was fourteen—we run away. We took and come down the river in a boat. Went clear to Iowa. Had some half-brothers livin' there. We had a time of it—two green kids, livin' out at night till we got down there. Quite a change now, me drivin' a milk truck—but I make almost a hundred dollars a month, and that's more'n I need." He went on at some length about his having no use for people who bawled for relief as soon as there was nothing at their doors for them. "There's always work for the hands if you want it, but you got to find it. It don't come to you." In winter, he said, he kept himself alive and well with odd jobs. "First I seeded corn and dragged the field. I made enough money to buy me some fishlines and poles; I caught fish and sold 'em, and made me enough to keep me in food. Then I got to trappin', and I took me nearly a hundred dollars worth a fur out a the bottoms along the river lake. Come winter, I set to in the woods and cut ten cord of wood, and that kept me all through snow weather." The whistle of the train far below on the tracks made him cock his head and decide abruptly to be on his way, and we parted.

16 OCTOBER: Effie said this morning that, lying sleepless last night, she had heard wild geese going over almost constantly until dawn. This was verified subsequently by Andy Huerth, who said he had heard the honkers above his farm below the Ferry Bluff. They went doubtless to the fields out on the prairie, to feed on corn there.

17 OCTOBER: Up and to Mass at seven and found myself sitting beside Joan Roessler, a pert red-haired girl at least ten years my junior. Outwardly demure, she amused herself by poking me and offering me an extra prayer book each time I took out my notebook to put down something which had taken my fancy, and had difficulty in keeping herself from smiling at my surprise. At Communion, I looked at her with raised eyebrows as if to say, What, not going? She understood, grinned, and subsequently went. At the end of Mass, before I permitted her to leave her seat, I inquired in a quick whisper whether she had *actually* completed her worship. The mischief in her eyes answered adequately enough for what she would not do and say.

22 OCTOBER: Listening to the conversation of two old gaffers in the post office this morning, it occurred to me that the common German exclamation so often locally heard: *Herr Je!, Herrje!* or *Har Je!:* is a simple corruption of Herr Jesus!

23 OCTOBER: Zona Gale was in the village today, and I noticed for the first time that she looked a little tired; she has *frail* movements, such small, graceful hands and feet, and is herself essentially a small person. Though she spoke easily, she yet managed to suggest latent effort. Today she consumed quantities of soft peppermints while I held a dish of them for her. She discoursed on writing, on living in a small place—"I would not now live anywhere else. It seems to me that to be really creative, one *must* live in a small place." The macrocosm through the microcosm, I suggested, whereat she smiled and said, yes, she supposed it might be

that. "But it is restful, it's away from struggle and the harshness of city living. I know; I lived long enough in cities."

25 OCTOBER: Pete paused on Water Street to tell me this morning that he had spent yesterday hunting at the Ferry Bluff, and had seen there two deer and a mink. One day last week he had gone down along Bergen's Island, and had observed the tracks of two gray foxes hunting in the sedge along the east shore of the island. The tracks were about twenty feet apart, so that anything flushed within that distance would surely fall to the lot of one of them.

26 OCTOBER: Rode with Ray and Hugh today out from Upper Sac Prairie on County Trunk PF, along the rolling road toward Leland, parallel to the Baraboo Bluffs, brilliant with color still, and especially so with the shadows of great clouds passing over them. We paused briefly at Lohr's sorghum mill to look at the chutes for the disposal of the clay mixed with the cane juice to draw from it all fibers and foreign matter, a process about which I knew little. Hugh said it must be "the old-fashioned way," and Ray said it was. The mill is old, almost in collapse, set close to the roadside on a low shoulder of earth; behind it lay three piles of crushed cane stalks.

We drove on into the heart of the colorful hill country, through the foothills to the bluffs themselves, past the Keller farm, where almost I expected old Ferdinand to canter up to us astride his horse, past the old mill at Leland, through Denzer where grandfather Volk had once had a saloon, where mother lived and went to school, and came at last to

Baxter's Hollow. Here white pines held the slopes to green, framing the scarlet, claret, maroon brilliance of oaks, the yellow glow of birch and poplars turning. We drove up to Otter Creek and there got out of the car, descending at the first bridge to watch trout minnows swimming in the crystal pale green water there. Alders stood densely along the brook, their catkins already in evidence, and near by grew a grove of blue beech. I picked some of their twigs to examine the curious winged seeds, clustered so thickly here and there that a careless observer might hold them to be brown leaves. I examined the seed of the ironwood also, and while listening to Hugh exclaim about a sizable trout, saw a vision of pale yellow loveliness: a grove of witch hazel in full bloom, glowing in yellow glory among the naked trees there, each bush a mass of fragile blossoms, and within a few moments saluted this breathless beauty in *Witch Hazel.*

Pale on the forest trail,
at the brook's edge pale, pale
in leafless late October's wood,
blooms now the witch's hood,
the yellow glory of the magic tree,
long-boughs, the gallows tree,
finder of waters under earth;
wizard's water stick in autumn birth
flames topaz, lemon in the somber wood,
November's tree bare beauty, divining wood,
fearless of cold and frozen air,
proud fragile bloom, witch hazel's fair,
unhurried flaunting of the season's order;
blooms at the upland pasture's border

where the dark wood grows away,
springs forth the brook, the willows sway,
where hornbeam leans and alder catkins hang,
where birch's fruit assaults the sky and tang
of peppergrass lies lingering in air;
there crystal water holds its form, there
blooms the ghost of spring,
young year's retreating shadow, brushed by owl's
brown wing–
pale, spectral April, last breath of spring, pale
yellow glory, pale on the forest trail.

27 OCTOBER: Tom Bardshaw stopped me on my way home from school this morning, whither I had perforce gone to inquire into discipline regarding a rumored drinking party in school. In his cunning way, Tom inveigled me across the road out of earshot of his helper who winked knowingly when Bardshaw did not see, and, after much hemming and hawing, suggested that he would not be averse to being nominated for the job of county supervisor in the spring caucus. "I'd consider it," he said. "I'd take such a job!" confiding in me with a certain condescension, as if he

hoped I would bear his standard at the caucus. He said he did not think Ray would do for that position—"he's too easily influenced!"—whereat I said sententiously but effectively, "Let us not judge a man before giving him a chance!" and Tom, disgruntled, said nothing more, but conveyed what he hoped was emphasis for his desire by more transparent fawning—flickers of his shrewd eyes and half-smiles, as if he and I shared some great secret. So he returned to his helper's side, and I took the occasion also to suggest to him that he root out the poison ivy opposite the oil tanks east of the house, and he said knowingly: "That's poison oak!" speaking a little indulgently, as if this were one thing he knew and I did not. I smiled and explained patiently that "poison oak" was a colloquial term for poison ivy, both being precisely the same thing, *Rhus toxicodendron,* but later I wondered to what end I had wasted my time explaining this or anything else; for all the good it does, I had better go out into the woods and preach to the birds, or proceed to any fence post and address it without illusions.

28 OCTOBER: Crossing the street from the drugstore, I met Slim Snow and his daughter coming out of Clara's place. I reflected jokingly that a tavern was hardly the place to take his daughter, at which he, with much gesturing and long-windedness, explained that she had said to him she had a pain in her belly, and, "So I tuk her down and bought her a peppermint schnapps," which probably warmed her up beyond all proportion to her pain.

31 OCTOBER: Standing with Hugh to look for a while into a pool at the edge of sunlit shallows where the brook curves

at the far end of the Lower Meadow this afternoon, we heard from the south along the meadow's rim a crackling of underbrush, as of someone approaching, and looked up silently just as a young buck cleared the brook from the opposite high bank in one bound, and in a trice vanished into the bottoms through which we had just come, unaware of us because the wind was not in his favor. Doubtless hunters in the south had frightened him up. The swiftness and silence of his graceful passing stayed in mind, a thing of beauty.

Following the brook to the Mazomanie road bridge, we approached three people, two men and a woman, gathering bittersweet most ineptly at that place. They were quite apparently from the city, betrayed by garish clothes and the obvious gay conviction that they were out in God's own country, children of nature. Hugh watched them in some astonishment before he cracked dryly, "Do you realize that these people are fellow nature lovers?" Myself almost had a conniption fit, as great-aunt Lou might have put it. The trio made a touching little scene: big strong man pulling down tree so pretty but emptyheaded girl could get bittersweet, while lone wolf of party went off by himself and startled up a rabbit, whereupon the fair maiden jumped up and down and shrieked in a tinny, shrill voice that Art ought to be here with his gun. At this point Art came in his car, and she told him excitedly about the rabbit, which, by this time, was well on its way into the next county, urging him to go right up there and bag it. Art looked at us and decided that the four of them were comedy relief. His perspicacity cut short our entertainment, and the four drove away.

1 NOVEMBER: Great-uncle Arnold with great-aunt Annie and some of the cousins stopped in from Spring Green today for a visit. Great-aunt told graphically how gypsies had robbed great-uncle; two women, who lured him to their car under pretense of being lost. He had gone trustingly enough, she said, with many little fun-making glances at him, and one of the women, offering to tell his fortune, had poked him, "In the belly. 'Big Belly!' she says. 'Never mind,' he says. 'You ain't havin' t' carry it around!' By feelin' him that way, they put him off his guard, and they got his wallet. 'Course, there was only four dollars in it, anyway, but they got it. My! Pa was that mad!" "Four dollars is four dollars," said great-uncle, still miffed at the thought of how he had been put upon, but able to laugh at it presently, his hearty laughter as always shaking his great frame, his eyes merry.

7 NOVEMBER: Apropos certain city hunters who yesterday scoured the foodless bottoms for squirrels, uncle Joe mentioned on the way to church this morning that the only time he had ever seen squirrels in the marshes was at "Wandering time. I come on ten of 'em swimming the river, and I rowed over toward one to catch it, and, by God, if the damn' thing didn't go up one oar and down the other, and I never touched it!"

12 NOVEMBER: Cousin Kate came up for supper today. She was in high good humor, laughing a great deal today, and replying to my accusation that she was a bit tetched by saying that, "It's the company I'm in. I don't mean you, Rosie." In the midst of this laughter, she had a flash of con-

science suddenly and said she ought not to laugh so much, "Because of my sorrow!"—her reference again to cousin Caspar's death almost two years ago. I told her that Cap was probably saying (if indeed he were in a comfortable place) that the old lady had finally come to life again! She almost choked at this, but retained her good humor in her usual defense that I should learn to pray more, go to church more often, and so on.

13 NOVEMBER: I paused briefly at the harness shop this afternoon, and learned that Mr. Elky had been there and given Hugh a letter for me. This was in reference to my use of the word *venal* some time ago; he had looked it up, and did not understand my purpose in using it to describe local politicians assailed in a dodger the other day. So he had written this letter:

My Dear August, I received your letter (dodger) by a Special Deliverer. I have put it into a frame so as to hang up. I looked that word Venal up. But that is not the Word that is my life. Vital is the Word that is the Spirit that is my life. So here I will bet you One Hundred Dollars that you are in the Wrong. As I base all my understanding upon God's right which I Know is never never wrong. We all have but one right and that is never wrong. As that is upright and the truth and the good Spirit that is our life. Love. So if you do not agree with me come around and I will put up the $100.00 against you to see who is right. *Elky or Derleth. Put up or Shut up. I thank you, Elky.*

I stopped to visit with Frieda and Mrs. Pillep this afternoon, en route to the hills, and learned that their old shep-

herd dog had been shot yesterday. Gus had told the hired man to dispose of him, but the shooting was difficult because the dog was gun-shy, and, however decrepit and ailing he was, he seemed to sense that his end was near, and would not for a long time venture within range of the hired man waiting patiently behind the barn for him to come. Gus, home from the fields, looked repeatedly toward the place where the dog usually lay, but did not ask whether the old dog had been shot, nor would the hired man say.

Passing from this death to the night on which her father had died, a victim of slow paralysis, Mrs. Pillep said that he was dying, just slipping over, when her mother, looking from the window of the house toward the Park Hall, saw the expected children coming down the street from the railroad station. *"O Vater, die Jungen!"* she cried out, and called him back. So he lived until much later that night. "Yes, I remember that day," said Mrs. Pillep, "the day he had his stroke, the beginning of his end, it was. How he said a week before that in Buro's Saloon, 'How long will it be before I too feel death in me?' and now he knew. That day I was over there helping ma put down meat—they'd butchered a hog—Gus was sawing wood somewhere, and my brother Freddie was getting the hay in the marsh. My sister from Milwaukee and her boy—he was five—were there, but my sister from Lodi couldn't come because the roads were so bad; she came the next day around by train. Frieda was sick that day, home from school, and the fire went out on her. She got into bed, and the fire went out, and when I came home there was the water as cold as when she'd pumped it, the water on the stove for the pigs, and we always warmed it that time. But pa was eighty-two."

When I left almost an hour later, Mrs. Pillep called after me, "Tell your ma to fry some eggs for your supper; you talked enough for four!"

15 NOVEMBER: Andy was in the harness shop today. He said he was just recovering from a cold. "Had it all last week." I opined he likely got it singing in the choir, keeping his mouth open too widely and too long. He laughed good-naturedly and said I ought to be in the choir. "If you did a little something, like singin' for instance—goggone if it wouldn't take a little off your waist. We need some bass, anyway."

Heard today an amusing incident which had taken place at Emil Banifs' place in the bluffs during the American Legion shoot on Armistice Day. The boys had gathered early to go out after helping Emil with some of his work. Bill and Emil had gone outside and were ready to pull out of the yard when a car drove in. An itinerant preacher got out of the car and came up to Emil obsequiously, bending toward him, hand extended, and saying, "How are you, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . Let me see, now—I forget the name." Emil drew himself up, all the short, stubby length of him, let out an horrendous oath and said, "I never seen you before and you never seen me. You're just like all the salesmen!" "I'm the Reverend Pabody," said the preacher. "Mister, I'm too far gone," said Emil. "But there's a bald-headed man in the house I wish you'd get to work on." The preacher insisted on holding Emil. "Don't hold me up here," Emil continued. "I got work to do. The soldiers are comin', and we're havin' a bombard-

ment at eleven o'clock." The preacher began to look nervous at this, but tried again. "A what?" he asked. "Why, don't you know what us soldiers do at eleven o'clock this day?" demanded Emil. "No, I confess I don't," said the preacher. "Well, we all stand facin' east and say, 'You'd all be here, boys, if you'd a ducked!' " Emil got into the wagon beside Bill and pulled away, shouting back, "Work on that bald-headed man, Preacher. He needs it!"

16 NOVEMBER: I stopped in briefly this morning to visit Emmy, and somehow (possibly while at some of her coffee-cake) got to talking about food in the "old days." "Why, I remember how we could go down cellar and see barrels of apples, all kinds of smoked meat—bacon, ham, bologna—hanging from the rafters, and jam and jelly and canned fruits —everything; a man could live for months on what he had in the cellar!" said Emmy. Lena Hofer was there, ironing, and putting in her contribution every little while. "Your great-grandma Damm, she used to make yeast. Sold it at a penny a cup," she said. "She made the best, too—it was so sweet!"

Walking down a side street today, I was hailed by Tom Bardshaw in his characteristic confidential beckoning, and, going over, was told with a queer kind of triumph that he had resigned his job. One of the Village Board members, seeing Tom in his typical working attitude—lolling in the village truck while his three helpers worked—stepped over and said that this wouldn't do, whereupon Tom had his big moment. "Oh, I resigned this morning," he said airily. Learning that Tom's job would take him out of town for a while,

someone cracked: "Well, there's one newspaper less in town!"

17 NOVEMBER: At Harold's today, his uncle, celebrating his seventy-second birthday, appeared with a bottle of herb-medicine, a cure-all made of bark, leaves, and sundry other materials, over which had been poured a kind of oil, the whole smelling abominably, but guaranteed to cure anything by the Indians who had sold it to him. The old man went around with a piece of cotton and the oil, proceeding finally to put some of the oil into his ear, though it smarted and burned, and clapping the cotton over it. "I vunder," he said, "wedder it would cure a earache." "Is your ear sore?" asked Harold. "Oh, no. I vas chust vundering," replied the old man, treasuring his medicine. Harold wisely gave up.

25 NOVEMBER: This afternoon Hugh, Junior, and I went into the marshes, hiking along the usual winter route to the brook, across it to the brook's outlet, and to Bittersweet Island east of Dead Hog Hole, where we startled up a pair of killdeers, one of which vanished, to cry out intermittently from some secret place, the other staying near by, teetering on the sand, and protesting against our invasion of their solitude. At the south end of Dead Dog Hole, the gale blowing today had flung wave after wave upon the ice sheet's edge there, and had chipped the ice, so that hundreds of glittering particles lay in the water and on the ice, and with each wave now tinkled pleasantly against the ice, a small tintinnabulation as of distant bells. From Bittersweet Island we went across Hiney's Slough and up the Lower Meadow

from the slough's upper reaches, pausing at the old maple, for many years so hollow that three or four of us can stand in its shell, and marveled that the ancient tree should still exist, thickly budded, with all its heart burned out years past, and one great side of its old bole fallen away. But it grows and flourishes, leafing out year after year, nothing daunted by the loss of its heart while its great roots knuckle the ground in all directions. Not far up the meadow's edge Junior spied a wasp's nest, and broke it off, meaning to take it home. I suggested that he might be able to persuade his irascible aunt to wear it as a bustle, or perhaps hang it over the heat register in her home. Since Junior did not readily understand, Hugh showed him through a hole made in the nest by wintering birds how the wasps lay there in their white-capped cells, their black bodies folded in tiers of cells, and he put the nest among the boles of an old linden, so that we might watch it in the spring.

1 DECEMBER: When Gus Naffz wants to express a mood of depression or is out of sorts or dislikes the weather, he customarily says, as I heard him say in Cunradi's drugstore today: "I feel so Maria Magdalenish!"

5 DECEMBER: Painters having completed the work in the post office this morning, they left the long seat against the window with a sign: "Wet Paint. Please do not Sit." Old Puli, who has for years warmed this bench, came in without seeing the sign, and the landlord almost broke his neck reaching him before he sat. He caught him in time, but the expression on Puli's face was a delight to see; he was indignant and almost childishly disappointed; he stood looking

at the painted seat as if it personally had insulted him, before he took his leave, uneasy and unaccustomed to standing where he had always hitherto sat. Presently old Mrs. Heldorf came in, noticed that the seat gleamed unusually, and edged toward it, feeling it tentatively to satisfy herself that the paint was fresh. Relinquishing the idea of sitting down there, she warned away old Menges, who came and gawped blearily at the paint as if he did not believe her and then wandered out again, cutting diagonally across the street in his snail's pace and stopping traffic. While Menges was making his way home, John Ansbach came in, looked squarely at the sign, read it, and sat down; within a minute he looked back at the sign, a pained expression of awareness on his face, just too late becoming cognizant of what he had read.

6 DECEMBER: Mrs. Jorges died this morning, her long struggle lost. Her old father still lives, and she had hoped to outlive him, and to that end had kept herself alive longer than she might have lived had she given in at once to the cancer that destroyed her, instead of battling it. After a long sleep yesterday afternoon, she awoke at six o'clock last evening and said to her daughter at the bedside: "It's coming to an end now!" and very practically gave directions for her funeral: "No expensive funeral, now:" and her burial, and then lapsed into the coma from which she did not emerge. So the endless toil of her last years came today full circle; she need no longer labor up and down the steps, nor drag herself from her home to church and back, nor endure the trial of breathing with her pain-racked body.

9 DECEMBER: Mr. Crabosch came into Kroger's this morning to sample cheese under the pretext of buying a pound. He duly tasted five different kinds, made some trifling criticism of each, and escaped without buying any, professing himself dissatisfied with all the cheese offered him. He was doubtless well pleased with himself for having wangled about a nickel's worth of cheese at no cost to himself other than the fakery of judicial expressions and a faint air of self-importance. I watched him with some amusement, and for a while, misled by his hearty opening, "I want a pound of cheese!" actually thought he might possibly buy; but no, he did not. When I met him subsequently on his way home, he carried nothing which could remotely be thought a package of cheese.

10 DECEMBER: Spending a few hours at the *News* shop this afternoon, while Bert Giegerich printed my Christmas cards, I listened to Ida telling about old Mrs. Schönfeld's little candy store, which stood at the place where Ziemke's jewelry store now stands. "In those days a penny was a lot of money to us. We got one sometimes on Sunday, and since Mrs. Schönfeld lived behind her shop, we went there to buy candy that day. How long a time we spent trying to decide between long licorice sticks and colored cocoanut strips and gum drops or little sugar hearts! I marvel now at her patience with us! She would come from her quarters at the sound of the bell, which jangled and tinkled whenever the door was opened, and she'd stand there patiently, until our inability to make a selection prompted her to lean over and say, '*Hah nu*?' to spur us. Her husband used to repair

clocks in the same building, and she sold dishes and such stuff, too. Oh, that was fifty to sixty years ago; her store was gone before 1900 already."

12 DECEMBER: I sat today for a while with mother and grandmother in grandmother's house, where the coal stove glowed redly and cozily in the early December dusk, and heard grandmother go on about what a baby and boy I was. "Oh, you were a little devil!" she said. "I remember that time when Hildred was born, how Mrs. Ganzlin and I got to talking and you ran away from us. You were dressed in one of those Russian suits—blouse and belt and baggy pants—and you hid. We called and called, but you wouldn't answer. We almost went crazy, thinking about what your mother would say, but at last we found you hiding in a cornshock in the field next to the house, and were you dirty! Oh, my! You had smut all over you! We washed you off as well as we could and took you back to grandma Derleth's, where you were staying then, while your mother was so sick. . . . And that time you ran away and jumped on to a load of peas going to the factory, and you hung there; so I had to leave Hildred with Emma Schroeder and run after you. And I ran up to the corner where you turn, and there the farmer stopped and let you off; he didn't know you were on. Then you could walk back nice enough, though! We were living in the Niederer house then; that was the place where you chopped down my hydrangea bush, playing George Washington, and came into the house where we were talking and said, 'Grandma, I chopped you some wood!' My nice hydrangea bush, clean off to the roots!" I remembered this all too well.

Grandmother was in good form. She talked for a while about the various houses in which she had lived on the lower mill road, and then remembered an incident of my boyhood when Karl Ganzlin and I fished. "And then there was that time when you and Karlie went fishing in Dickerson's Slough and forgot to come home. At supper time, you weren't there, and by nine o'clock we were sure you were drowned, and your mother and Mrs. Ganzlin set out to look for you." And met us near the creamery, just north of the railroad bridge; I remembered that clearly, and the indignation we felt at realization that anyone should have thought us incapable of taking care of ourselves. In those days it was the constant fear of every mother when her son was out later than he should have been that the river had taken him; the Wisconsin was and still is a bogey for mothers, but few indeed are the children it has taken. "Oh, you were balky!" continued grandmother. "You didn't do anything anybody told you to do. You did just what you pleased. You never paid any attention. You were the naughtiest child. You played with tin cans until you were known far over town for collecting them, and everybody tried to unload their rubbish on you. You never minded, and you went everywhere, and your mother never knew it. You came down to see me, and you went to where your aunt Virginia worked in the store looking for candy from her. Why, you hollered your head off as soon as you were born. And what a temper! Why, when your mother wanted to feed you and the milk didn't come right away, you shook your head, so angry you got right away. But Hildred was always such a good baby!"

Her reminiscences made the room mellow. "You wouldn't have thought he'd have amounted to anything," said mother,

shaking her head and laughing. Instantly grandmother said proudly, "I did. I always said that boy'd get to be somebody!"

16 DECEMBER: In the harness shop Eli had dragged from the dusk of years another "old saw" with which to greet his customers—pouring oil, as Hugh would put it, oil to overcome sales resistance. This one is appropriate only during a period of overcast skies, and was today much belabored, Eli having apparently come upon it suddenly and reluctant to relinquish it. "About time you people hang out the sun," he said to every customer who came in. "Aren't you fellows going to dust off that sun and hang it out pretty soon?" They liked it; they laughed about it, and discussed the muggy weather before coming down to the business of harnesses, before beginning to haggle about prices and complain about income, saying the small things they always say before reaching for their pocketbooks.

17 DECEMBER: I heard today of two ladies of Upper Sac Prairie—Mrs. Brenbieler, a frugal, practical woman, who went to the cemetery after her husband's burial and removed the ribbons from the bouquets on the grave; these ribbons the girls, her daughters, subsequently wore in their hair; and Mrs. Stolz, who entertained a great fancy for highly colored clothes and was immoderately fond of a green dress or coat worn with a purple umbrella. On occasion she wore odd stockings of bright colors, and usually dressed in outlandish fashion. One day, while visiting at an acquaintance's house, she was sharing in the attention of a salesman who was pressing his perfume upon the ladies, when suddenly

she stiffened and said with some dignity that she did not much care for perfumes. "I like my own smell best!"

20 DECEMBER: Young Jack Mason, working at the power dam, had instructions this morning to repair a certain transformer, and went out immediately after dinner to do so, but by some quirk mounted the wrong transformer, not the one from which the power had been shut off, and was electrocuted. Did habit make him careless, I wonder? "Weren't we at his wedding dance?" asked mother at table. "I guess we were," said dad. Later this afternoon I learned that Mason had been working on a neighboring transformer during the past week and had absentmindedly returned to it Monday afternoon, and so was killed; 66,000 volts went through him, burning most of his clothing off.

21 DECEMBER: I stopped in at Merks' today to visit Jo briefly, and was grieved to find her looking markedly poorer. She coughed almost constantly, her color was gone, and her features thinned. The mark of death was on her, and it was not easy to contemplate in one so well loved and so justly admired. Millie Pohlmann was there, and sat for a while making small talk before she got up to go. I gave Helen some alder branches to break up and put into a vase, hoping they might bloom for Jo to see, knowing how much she enjoyed their blossom. When Helen had gone from the room, Jo said quietly but intensely, "I wish it would end. I don't mind dying, but I hate to cough myself to death."

23 DECEMBER: While I sat in the harness shop today, Barney Weynand came in to get some gloves. He said he

was going "into the woods," which meant, of course, that he was chopping wood or felling trees or hauling at this time of the year. Barney spied the stoves, the farther one of which held fire, and said, "It must be cold the way you fellows fire!" But Eli disillusioned him, laughing, for Barney had gone to the nearer stove and held out his hands for warmth. "No, we keep that one you're at to fool the farmers. They come up to it and believe they're getting warm. We keep the heat all the same. So we're both satisfied."

24 DECEMBER: I went with Hugh this evening, as usual, to the Reformed Church program, and immediately missed Zappy. Hugh said he was now attending church elsewhere, doubtless carrying on before a new audience. But in a few moments we took heart, for Zappy's sister was there with

her family, able and willing to supply what Zappy had before given us. Indeed, she forthwith did so, holding one child next to her and another by the hand. This second child circled and strode up and down the aisle within the limits circumscribed by the flexibility of his mother's arm, and, with complete lack of inhibition, cried out from time to time, whereupon the audience looked gravely at Ellen, who affected not to notice, while her mother glared indignantly back, as much as to remind them that Christ had said, "Suffer little children to come unto me!" and now that they had come, all could suffer alike.

The program opened with the usual prelude on the organ and the piano, followed by a Sunday-school song, and finally by the minister's prayer, long and repetitive, with many false endings. Then came more song, after which the children had their day, an immediate diversion occurring in the second number's course, when a small child, cousin to one of the reciters, spied him and shouted shrilly, "Hey, Bobby!" The children, as usual, approached their ordeal with mingled fear and pride. Most of them either rushed wildly upon the platform or crept forward with great caution, pulling skirts or trousers, twisting hands, slyly seeking for their parents, and stumbled through their lines. Three or four of them were unusually aggressive, actually striding forward with arrogance and reciting with a distinct air of contempt for the audience. The Bellairs children were all eager enough to recite, and during each recitation their father, who was very much present near the historic spot where last year Zappy teetered and wheeled on his chair, looked proudly around as if to say: "I did it!" indicating by his attitude that by duly impregnating his wife so many times he had shown

sufficient reason for existing—his eyes wide, his mouth ready to grin, and so very wide, his attitude fatuously proud, the effect of the whole quietly hilarious.

After it was over, went from Harold's to Emmy's where the old gang had assembled, as always. Hearing that I had had a tooth taken out that morning, Minnie Truckenbrodt, with her usual infectious animation, told how a Dr. Maurney, who came from Mazomanie in the old days, used only to give his patients a long pull of brandy, and then set to work extracting teeth, one after the other. "Right across the room he threw them," she said, with appropriate gestures, "one after the other. Out with them and over the floor. My mother had all her teeth pulled that way in one sitting." At this point Renna came in, hailing them all with almost boisterous greetings, and I thought of *Any Day Now,* and I remembered how Jo had told me, on the occasion of a visit made to her within the past month, after she had read the manuscript of *Any Day Now,* that at one time she had been on the train coming up from Mazomanie to Sac Prairie, when a salesman on his way to Sac Prairie had sat down beside a fellow salesman, and they had talked about their girls, one of them actually producing a ring and indicating that he meant to propose. To each of them, apparently, his "girl" had managed to convey that he was the only man. But suddenly it was revealed quite by accident that they both spoke of the same girl: Renna: and they realized that neither meant any more than the other to her, and that proposal was never made. "That was much of her trouble. She was the same to all the men. Jolly, a good sport all the time. So she lost out everywhere." She sat down and went on at some length

about hearing Sinclair Lewis speak of me and *Still Is the Summer Night* in Milwaukee, telling how she had got in to hear him by popping out her yellow streetcar pass. "I noticed they all had yellow tickets; so I thought I'd take a chance. They couldn't do more than throw me out." The atmosphere thickened, pervaded me pleasantly, and, as midnight came, I left reluctantly. So home and to bed.

26 DECEMBER: The first sunlight early this morning made the heaven-ascending smoke from village chimneys a pale rose in color, very lovely and striking against the clear winter sky.

28 DECEMBER: Returning from the marshes today, I paused at the harness shop and found Andy there. He was holding forth on colds. "The one thing about it," he said, "you take it like I said, I get 'em quick, and, goggone it, I get rid of 'em quick. The last one I got I caught that time I hauled the wood back from the Spring Slough on my sled. By gosh all fishhooks, it's kinda a upgrade there from the trestle to the fill jest before the back river, and I guess I overdid it a little and breathed in my mouth, and, goggone it! I always get it that way, it hits me there in the bronchial tubes." Hugh said he was dressed too warmly. "No, I ain't," Andy replied. "Besides, I'm always careful when I work outside. I take off my clothes. It ain't as if I chopped in all of 'em and then took 'em off; that's the way most fellers git their colds." So he opened his heavy sheepskin mackinaw and the jacket below, pulled up his shirt, and showed us that his underwear was "summer stuff," light cotton, even though of wrist and ankle length.

30 DECEMBER: The old gaffers in the post office were this morning talking about deep snows. "I remember," said one, "when we druv over the tops of the fences, the snow was so deep and froze hard. Many a time." They went on recalling snows of yesteryear until one of them, a stranger who had said nothing, looked up from his silent self-communion and said dryly, "I was born in the State of Maine." After a brief silence, the conversation of the others was again resumed; but something had gone out of it; the specter of Maine and what great snows might have fallen within this stranger's memory clouded their discourse, and soon the conversation died resentfully away.

31 DECEMBER: Great-aunt Lou came in today for a brief visit, with cousin Mabel. She said she had been ill, and, indeed, the lines of her face had deepened somewhat, and her cheeks lacked their customary color. "Off and on I can still kick," she said cheerfully. I told her what she needed was a man to replace great-uncle Joe, as if anyone could replace him for her. "He's still the same old tease," she complained to no one in particular. "He ain't changed none." She spoke of grandmother, saying she must go out and see Lizzie for a few minutes, but she continued to sit there, unwilling to move, and talked about the old days with a certain reluctance born of the knowledge that they were, alas! over and done; but at last she got up and went over to grandmother Volk's house to visit with her.

Late tonight, after a visit from Karl, sat to "close my books," to reckon the year's account, despite neuralgia, sitting at my desk for the last few minutes of the year, waiting for the

year to go and for the new to come. And I thought of the year—H. P. L. dead, Jo dying—and the slow, corroding changes in all things manifest, as always, inevitably. The clock struck twelve, the bells rang out; the wind went down, and along the rim of earth, clouds banked for snow.

3 JANUARY: Effie said tonight that Harold's uncle had returned for another visit, and, having settled himself, said that someone at Juneau—"Vun of dem teachers!"—had asked about me, whereupon Effie told him I had sold a story for a thousand dollars, and he, squinting up at her in open-mouthed amazement, said, "He *dit!* He's smarter dan he looks, den!"

4 JANUARY: Jo died this morning at one o'clock, and I was grieved to learn it, though it is best now that she is freed from suffering. To the last she was interested in everything that was best for her Sac Prairie, and she was never too ill, too pain-racked, to listen to news of school and library. Indeed, I reflected this morning, her entire life was given to service. I thought of how she used to tell in the old library of Saturday evenings how she went out to teach into the country at sixteen, how she came home tired each evening, and with so much work that she could not even talk to her mother, who had spent the lonely day waiting for her, so that the small things, the trivia of Sac Prairie's life—the pulse, really—might pass between them and so take on warmth and significance for the older woman. "I regret that now," she had said more than once. And I thought, too, of how she disliked to offend people, often at the expense of her own rightness, and thought harshly of those who con-

tributed to bringing about this weakness in her. So now she is gone, and a grievous loss to Sac Prairie. I put down something in appreciation of her, to be published in this week's paper; but words are too inadequate, they say nothing in the face of death, the best they can do is to dull a little the finality of it.

5 JANUARY: This evening the new moon, nearing the first quarter, lay a chrome yellow in the west, very low at eight o'clock, the visible rind of it curved upward, instead of to the side as most usual. Mars was bright, thirty degrees or so above the southwestern line. Both were visible through the window before my desk, and the moon in particular shone with a kind of deeper, warmer brilliance.

9 JANUARY: On the way home from Water Street this morning, I saw how at Schwenker's back door the birds and squirrels, accustomed to being fed there, had tracked up the newly fallen snow waiting for Mrs. Schwenker to come with bread crumbs and suet. Their tracks were clear and distinct, and everywhere were signs of birds and squirrels, and even of Meise's dog, that pathetic Scot who looks his woe.

The trappers say that muskrat houses are "big as haystacks," which, they aver, means that there will be "plenty cold weather and storm before spring thaws set in." The muskrat, however, has been as wrong as the groundhog, the squirrel, and other prophets.

10 JANUARY: Bill Schwenker—the harness shop's Eli—fell on the ice yesterday and broke his leg above the knee, and I

asked Hugh about it in the shop this morning. He said that there was a bad fracture, but no break. It had happened, he went on, at two o'clock yesterday afternoon, but Eli was now abed and resting comfortably. Gus Naffz came in to inquire also, and after him came Andy, who knew nothing of it until he gathered the fact that an accident had taken place from our conversation. "Well, it sure was slippery yesterday," he said. "I almost took one myself, just saved myself from going flat on my ass. I was going along there just as nice when all of a sudden, goggone it, my feet went out from under. But I managed to catch 'em." In a little while Mr. Elky came in to commiserate Hugh on Eli's fall, but said cheerfully, "There was old Farger; he fell and broke his leg when he was seventy-six, and he died at ninety-four." He went on presently to talk about himself and his ailments. "I've got a sure cure for every ailment of the skin. It's just salt, common salt. I just rub it in. Now I got a little eczema in my hair, and every time it gets worse, why, I just rub in salt, and that stops it. I went to all the doctors and they didn't do me no good, that time I had the itch so bad, and then one day I rubbed myself with that old-fashioned lye-soap, and the salt on it stopped the itch, and that night I could sleep. Since that day, I just use the pure salt; it's the best thing. And my back—I always had a weak back and have yet. When I was young I never expected to live beyond fifty, and I'm seventy-six now." Nor does he look it, I thought, with his full fleshy face, not yet much wrinkled, and his lively eyes. "But look at old Pletz," he concluded triumphantly, "he's a hundred and three now, and he feeds his hogs himself yet every day!"

12 JANUARY: After the lights on Water Street had been out for three nights, and the cause of this accident having been traced down to a grounded cable somewhere between the post office and the bridge, two men today got to work on the cable, where it lay all summer and autumn exposed to weather, before the corner garage. While the two men were engaged in working the cable from the cranny where it had lain laxly uncovered, a stray dog paused to help, taking hold of the cable with his teeth and tugging whenever the men tugged. There the dog stayed for the best part of the afternoon, working as industriously as the men, serving them well, being convenient for a great show of affection, petting, etc., every little while, thus affording the men a few minutes' rest from their labor every so often. By dusk the village wags cracked that the village government might as well bill the taxpayers for three men and pocket the dog's wages.

I went this evening with Karl to see the Home Economics Club exhibit: Mexican tablecloths, linen, shawls, sheets, damask cloths, spreads, rugs, etc., ranging in age from a century ago to the present. Going from one room to another, we were presently separated; Miss Ella Naffz took me in tow, and, much to my amusement, marched up to proud, haughty Miss Ilsa Lahman's damask tablecloth, turned it over briefly from the lower edge, and said, "A beautiful piece—but incorrectly hung." It was underside out, and Miss Lahman was mightily chagrined, and looked hastily away, as if attentive to something invisible to us, after which she walked quickly away with that medieval-stairs walk char-

acterized by Jo some time ago. Miss Naffz then pointed out some handkerchiefs which, she said, had been found in the wall of the old Truckenbrodt building when it had been taken down, but by whom put there or when, no one knew. They were of good quality, showed little wear, and were initialed in red silk: *A. B.*: large and soft in texture. Presently she took herself off, saying she must now entertain someone else, and I found Karl once more.

13 JANUARY: Early this afternoon the flutelike *phe-be-be* of the chickadees sounded in the village, plaintive and welcome to the ear. And in the harness shop, March became tangible where the soft silver-gray catkins of Hugh's pussy-willows, set against the back window, had broken their sheaths.

"Red stove," said mother, coming in from grandmother's this afternoon.
"Cold day tomorrow," answered father.

The temperature today rose from seventeen above to almost thirty at nightfall, and, shortly after seven, the gray, overcast sky let down snow, a soft, gentle fall of small flakes, but thick, so that by eleven two inches had fallen. And still it came down, with the night comparatively alight for the presence of the moon somewhere behind the clouds, and the yellow streetlights fogged and misty for the snow that stood between them and me. It was pleasant walking home through the park, where snow lay as fallen upon the pines and oaks and maples there. Near the old lemonade stand, rabbit tracks ventured out from beneath and angled back again, with snow already quietly obliterating the trail be-

yond the roof's edge line, and pausing there in that wooded place near the north field's edge, I thought of lines to put down, and, going home, wrote *Lonely Place*, while the cat sat on the windowsill beyond my desk mewing occasionally and looking complacent, as much as to point to her good behavior and command my favor.

Slow as last leaves in slow, last windless dusk, slow
on the stubble's roofless ruins falls the snow:
over dry grass, the pasture, bare bough,
field's withered edge where now the plow
deserted leans on the winter air:
over the fox's path, lynx lair,
the rabbits' run. Now snow invades the steeps of air,
descends the space-suspended stair
which hawks in autumn climbed, brings down
the eagle's solitudes to drown
the soundless woods, and, going past, I pause, walk
in that snow-caged space,
to exile in its loneliness my own deep lonely place.

14 JANUARY: In the harness shop late this afternoon, I found Andy and Hugh engaged in repairing Andy's shoes, and I said to Andy that he ought not to stand around in his stocking feet, whereupon Hugh laughed and, looking closer, I saw that Andy wore, besides heavy woolen socks, felt bedroom slippers, over which he put on his shoes and boots. "He's dressed warmer than we ever dress," observed Hugh. Andy was very well satisfied with his precautions against colds. Though he had just got over a cold, he was confident that he would not now catch another soon.

17 JANUARY: This morning the trees were covered with snow, every bole and twig, and the joyous ringing of sleigh-bells rang up and down the village streets, a sound not so often heard as a decade ago. Hugh's birdhouses, down for the winter, were heaped with snow, the old apple tree held the whiteness of it on every branch, and the cistern pump, covered for the winter, was shrouded. Against the shop's windows, the pussywillow catkins were something for Hugh "to feast my eyes on."

Having occasion to do so, I called on Circ this evening, and found him typing a form letter, a felt hat well down on his head. He was looking very grim and determined, but he spoke in the main rationally enough, saying he thought the public library should have certain books, and he meant to see that the library bought them, if I didn't mind. As if I would! I assured him I had nothing to do with it, and agreed with him about the books he had in mind, whereupon he asked about certain publishers of whom I had never heard, nor, I am certain, had he. His papers, files, catalogues, "circs"—all were as usual in the most hopeless confusion, though I observed that he had moved his files into several old shoe boxes, where, I have no doubt, they were, as ever, cryptically jumbled. I examined his furniture, an outlandish conglomeration. Three tables, to begin with, a rickety typing chair, another for visitors, a water cooler standing on an old oil tank, the aforementioned files, his typewriter, a filing box, a cabinet, and a circular oddity upon the tiers of which he had plants in various stages of life and death, most of them in the latter, apparently for lack of water; so it would appear that even he cannot do too many things at once. When he spoke of the books the public library should have, his eyes lit up; indeed, his face beamed, and even his large nose and wide mouth seemed to take on a red luster, unless this derived from my mind, unhappily disordered by the confusion of Circ's estate. After I had taken my departure, I paused briefly beyond his door, and heard him begin to type again, his typing accompanied by a low, almost unearthly, muttering characteristic of him.

18 JANUARY: Andy came into the harness shop this afternoon, complaining of a cold. He was dejected and said ruefully that he had a cold *again,* at which I expressed some amused sympathy, since he is forever taking such good care of himself and forever just ridding himself of colds. "What, again?" I asked, to which he replied, "Oh, it comes and goes, comes and goes!" whereupon Hugh broke in dryly, "Making the rounds, eh?"

While at Marquardt's this evening, I had some conversation with August, who took me into his room and showed me his talking book machine; thus it is that he entertains himself, now that blindness has overtaken him. He had been reading Dumas' *The Black Tulip,* and played a portion of one record, managing efficiently despite his blindness. He made some talk about my work, in which he appeared much interested, and, in reference to the appearance of Lena Hofer as Lena Maerklein in *Still Is the Summer Night,* said he remembered how she and her sister, Millie—"She's dead, now!"—used to come up the street on their way home of evenings singing lustily at the top of their voices, a ditty that began—

> *Oh, the grasshopper sat on the railroad track;*
> *Good-by, my lover, good-by!*

"But they came by it naturally. Old man Kleinlein, their father, as soon as he had a few drinks, went out into the street and just bellowed! He never said anything you could make out, but just a kind of animal-like sound. You could hear him for blocks acoming!"

19 JANUARY: This afternoon I went into the woods at Hiney's Crossing, dawdling along so that I might enjoy the soft thaw fragrance on the gentle south wind. The snow was unbroken there, save for the tracks of a sleigh which had preceded me into the bottoms, but had not yet returned; so that I might reasonably expect to find it somewhere along the way. While pursuing this trail through the oak glade beyond the crossing, my attention was drawn to a large patch of broken snow among the trees on the little knoll, and, turning to investigate it, I found the snow literally beaten down with the tracks of squirrels, crossing the earth from tree to tree, and coming down here and there to venture to some likely remembered place and dig for buried nuts. No other track was visible, and all around the glade the snow lay unbroken save for the sleigh trail; only here beneath the oak trees was this endless succession of squirrel prints, which made a curious pattern. I went around it and returned to the sleigh path, crossing toward the upper reaches of Hiney's Slough, where I saw the sleigh and the team unattended in a grove of maples south of where I came to the slough's edge. A large barred owl flew low near me, taking wing from a maple and mounting higher into a neighboring tree, but he was soon lost in the wood to the north. I crossed the rickety fence there and, hearing a disturbance below, went quietly down along the slough until I came upon Mike Fassbender gathering cress with the aid of a knife and pitchfork. He had almost a tubful, and said he was getting it for the chickens, though it was certainly good enough for the table. He paused and made conversation. He said his son had slain a great horned owl lately; the bird had been sitting on the barn roof, waiting for

their pigeons, and had been killed with a pitchfork hurled at it. I could not forbear extolling the merits of owls and hawks generally, whereat he nodded gravely and gave me hearty agreement, though I suspect he doubted what I said. I left him presently to follow a mink's trail along the ice of the slough a little above the place where he was, and farther beyond, in open places of the slough, saw a series of tracks leading to and from the water holes, the trails of small and lesser creatures overlaid by those of predators, fox and mink, and something that looked much like a wolf's mark. Of rabbit tracks, there were many; so, too, of squirrel, and a few of raccoon, skunk, and a lone opossum trail.

I went up along the slough, marking the trails over the snow-covered ice, the mounds of muskrat houses close to the bank, and paused at the hollow maple, stepping inside its ancient bole, the while marveling that with such wounds the old tree should still live, its buds even now swelling in anticipation of the coming spring, thick against the sky and beautiful to see. The old trees stood dark along the dried slough's bed, framed in the whiteness of unbroken snow. Passing them, I sought and found the wasp's nest hidden last autumn among the boles; no one had yet discovered it, no track was there to betray an interloper's curiosity, despite the fact that not twenty feet away was the well-worn trail made by Lensons on their way to Bittersweet Island after wood. Birch buds made their singular small beauty upon the sky at the Lower Meadow's edge, where hung too the climbing false buckwheat's soft brown seeds, as at the brook's edge the osiers were bright red, and the alders leaned sunward. All along

the meadow and the brook the white-footed deer mice had made their small openings in the snow, had run to teasel and dogbane, goldenrod and wild parsnip, to pull down the seed-heads for their food, scattering brown seeds on the white snow and altogether, with their tracks, writing their simple story where any discerning eye might see. In many places, the mice had climbed the stalks which would not bend, shaking them free of snow and so exposing the seed-head, but in no place did the trail lead far from the snow-covered burrow, lest some predator see with too great ease the small gray bodies against the betraying snow.

22 JANUARY: While I stood at the Triangle this afternoon, changing film in my camera and watching the section crew go by, a car drove up behind me, and, turning, I saw farmer Hornung and his son Richie, getting out to work at the woodpile there. Richie went directly to the woodpile, hailing me, and began to work, but his father delayed, came up to me, and said he had something to ask me, and proceeded forthwith to request my opinion of his favorite priest and the priest's paper. I told him I thought little of the radiorating priest, which did not please him; what his expression might have been had I held forth on the priest in my typical fashion, I shudder to think. He said he thought that there were many good points about the priest and his paper, to which I replied that it was doubtless so; even the Devil had many good points, though they were less devious and there was considerably less nonsense about them in his case. He grimaced and said then that he was mightily displeased with the government, and indeed, he did look disgruntled; he said he was no longer going to vote, whereupon

Richie looked up and grinned, and both of us said he must at least vote, but he replied No sir, he wouldn't. By God! it was a damn' shame, but if he voted for a man and he didn't do what he promised, he'd be mad at himself for voting that way. "I c'n kick myself now," he said darkly. And if he voted for the wrong man, it would be just as bad. I suggested that conditions were not nearly as bad as in other parts of the world, to which he agreed, albeit hesitantly. Forthwith he began to praise Townsend and his mindless panacea for unemployment and poverty: the fantastic two hundred dollars per month for the aged. I tried briefly to explain the economic aspects of so much money being distributed every year, but he would not hear of anything against the plan, and I made my excuses and withdrew, nevertheless appreciating the little scene which doubtless had its counterpart in many places throughout the country.

23 JANUARY: On my way back from town this morning, I encountered Joe Lippert, as remarkable a character as ever strode the streets of Sac Prairie. He was in midwinter apparel: that is, in long black hair and beard, frizzled and belying his age, which is greater than anyone believes, and he wore an astonishing coat of a pale tan, almost watered yellow, appearance with irregularly spaced and sized black places, the whole looking outlandish indeed. He hailed me cheerfully, and I passed the time of day with him, remarking in passing that his coat was an old horsehide from which all the hair but that represented by the scattered black spots had worn off. I commented on his coat, whereupon he grinned and opined that he'd start a new fashion if he

weren't careful, his eyes twinkling and his dark face wrinkled with his wide-mouthed smile.

24 JANUARY: Downtown this afternoon I met Clara Halgenau, who said in her usual clipped fashion: "Wet. Sloppy. Hard walking," and looked over me or through me, with her mouth partly open, her watery blue eyes fixed palely and a little vacantly on space. I observed, as she walked away, that she had improvised leggings of newspapers, wrapping them around her thin legs and tying store string around them to hold them there.

28 JANUARY: Charlie Medstrom in Upper Sac Prairie had another chimney fire this morning, an occurrence so common at his home at about this time of the year that one wag estimated today it would be less expensive to have Charlie's chimney cleaned by the village than to spend twenty-five dollars annually extinguishing his chimney fires.

30 JANUARY: Harry Hayden Clark lectured this afternoon on the subject of Thomas Paine at the Park Hall, where the Freie Gemeinde celebrated Paine's-fest. He gave a very comprehensive and clear lecture, and showed with remarkable clarity that Paine was indeed no atheist, but a religious man, whose Newtonian philosophy was related to that of Thoreau; this was a grave shock to many of those present who had believed, without adequate investigation, that Paine was an irreconcilable atheist, and the expression of Miss Ilsa Lahman's face was disapproving and amusing, though it would have been more so, were she not known to be so *eingebildet*. At the conclusion of his scholarly address, Clark asked for

questions, whereupon Mr. Elky, whom I had not before seen, uprose and demanded of him, "whether these is your own idees or somebody else's?" and, "whether these things is right or wrong. You know," pursued Elky, waxing eloquent in the face of Clark's somewhat amazed attentiveness, "I base all my thoughts on right. What's right to you is right to me." I signaled Karl, and together we rescued Clark.

2 FEBRUARY: Aunt Bertha came today for a visit with grandmother Volk, who remains most of the time on her back in bed. However, when I went out to her little house this afternoon, I found her sitting up in her rocker, talking to mother and aunt Bertha. I asked her how she was, and she said, "The grave's opening for me!" somewhat convinced of it herself. I asked her cheerfully how big a funeral she wanted, whereupon she laughed and answered shortly, "As big as you can make it!" I abjured her then to use her good offices, in passing over, to make my way into heaven a little less arduous, since she understood, of course, that the interests of my soul were always unfortunately placed in secondary position by the necessity of living, and it might help if she explained the situation to St. Peter and whoever else made up the committee on entrances at the pearly gates. Her eyes shone, and she said I could depend upon her.

3 FEBRUARY: In today's *Press* appeared a classic tribute to a fellow member of her Ladies' Aid by one of the local scribes. It does not equal the letter she wrote to someone on *The Capital Times* in answer to an appeal for headphones for patients at the Sanitarium: "I am sending you the headphones our dear daughter used before she died. She had the

same thing. She died and went to her heavenly reward despite everything we could do to prevent it." However, in today's tribute, she had more elbow room, so to speak, and took advantage of it. Modestly headed *A Tribute,* it read:

On January 14th, as the church bells were ringing the noon day hour calling people to their respective homes the Lord also called and this time the call came to our dear friend and member. He called her to that home not made with hands eternal in the Heavens for which she longed. There were so many virtues in her life that I fear I cannot do her justice in this little Tribute. I have known her for many years but never did I learn to know her as well as in the last few years. I learned to know her in the home, as a neighbor, in church, in Sunday School and also in her vast circle of friends.

In her home she had had just a brief time to show her love as wife and then centered her whole love and affection around her only daughter and son-in-law with whom she lived, and who in turn made life pleasant for her. When she was no longer able to get around the house to attend to domestic duties she busied herself with her hands, she loved the radio, read the daily paper and the Church Messenger was welcomed weekly and from its columns she would tell what she had read.

As a neighbor, she manifested her Christian character, she did not only wear the badge of a Christian but lived the life of one. She delighted to cheer her neighbors with the first flowers from the garden and brought them even if walking was often difficult or show her kindness in many other ways. Her cheerful disposition often brought cheer where cheer was most needed.

In the church service she was seen regular feeling that she had to be about her Father's business, not only did she attend regular but was always willing to support any cause that was made known to her which needed support. She used to say "Du mutz man helfen" (You must help), and she did not grudgingly nor boastfully but gladly according as the Lord has prospered her.

In the Sunday School she loved to fill her place and enjoyed coming even though her hearing was impaired and she missed out on a lot she would say "Es war schoen" (it was nice) and was pleased she got something out of it. If my meager efforts helped her along on the path of life I feel amply repaid. In the Ladies Aid she retained her membership even because of her declining years she could not attend the meetings. She did her part when her time to serve came and all else that was required of a member. How happy she was to make the two quilts and donation whatever material was needed and also her work, she felt that she had done something in her little corner. In her vast circle of friends she will be missed as much as elsewhere, she loved to have her friends call on her and she loved to call on them, her satisfied disposition made friends among people of all denominations.

Her birthday and other holidays were her joy when friends remembered her with stacks of letters and cards. I love to think of our departed member and friend and also of all our dear ones gone before not on a beautiful isle of somewhere as is expressed in a song which has become so popular that it lost most its sentiment if it ever had any, not in a doubtful somewhere but rather in that city four square recorded in Revelations whose Builder and Maker is God.

4 FEBRUARY: The Village Board, having learned that the local gaol was infested with bedbugs, recently formulated a plan to rid the gaol of them by electrocuting them. One of the Board members appointed himself to oversee the execution, whereupon a local wag pointed out that electricity did not differentiate between common bedbugs and those with only two legs. The electrocution was inexplicably postponed.

5 FEBRUARY: I sat in the harness shop tonight during a storm. Noticing that the lights kept up a constant flickering,

Hugh said with mock gravity that this must be due to the electricity's coursing through the bodies of the hapless bedbugs in the village gaol.

7 FEBRUARY: I sat for a while this evening with grandmother Volk, whose decline in health is marked, and read to her that portion of *Stars Wore Westward* I have written—a mere beginning—but she enjoyed it. I outlined the story as it is to be to her, and she enjoyed this, too, striving with noticeable effort to remember other things I might use. She was pleased with my conception of her as a child, and told me a little shyly that when she had gone to the White Mounds School, where taught the man who was to become her stepfather, she had had a classmate boyfriend, an English lad named Lee Robison, a boy of her own age, slightly taller than she, with brown hair and blue eyes. He lived north of her home along the road there, and, "He used to wait for me in the mornings at the crossing by the marsh, and in the evenings he walked home with me. He used to carry my books." How her strong blue eyes sparkled when she remembered this, how her fair skin colored when she confessed, "There were others, too!" Her hair, I noticed as she lay abed, was white only near the roots, darkening through iron gray almost to black at its ends, and there was still much of it. Her sister, she went on presently, "the churlish one," was always a sullen girl; at parties she sat mum, she considered herself better than others, though events have since then shown rather the opposite. Asked about "book-reading" at school, grandmother said they had read Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, but could remember nothing else. She began presently to talk about uncle John, saying that

at one time she was standing in the saloon holding John on her arm, when a fortune-teller came in and told her that John was born to become someone but he never would, that he had the "signs" of success, but also the "marks" of failure. "And it turned out just that way," said grandmother, with deep faith in this gypsy's prophecy. "He always got just so far and no farther. Everything he turned his hand to went that way."

8 FEBRUARY: Hugh said today that one of the Parr boys had been in and told him that the country was going to pieces, nay, "The solar system's going to pieces!" but was unable further to explain his prophecy when Hugh guilelessly asked him what he meant by the solar system, not able to resist the temptation to lead him on. The young man only looked at him pityingly, waved his arms, and shouted, "Don't you know?" Hugh said blandly, no, he did not, whereupon Parr was stumped, repeated his original statement, and stood on that. "But what do you mean?" persisted Hugh. "Well, you know," stumbled Parr, "you know." "No, I don't," said Hugh patiently and with admirably assumed humility. "Well, then!" said Parr emphatically, and left the shop, baffled.

This afternoon I encountered Andy on the railroad bridge. He said he had intended to walk uptown, but that he would accompany me instead. He paused with me to examine a few bees struggling feebly along the warm timbers of the bridge; they were not much alive, moving a little, shuddering, rather, at my touch; the sun's warmth had brought them out, and the cold would chill them again before long. Apart

from this moment of examination, Andy could not be still. I reflected that for some men it is impossible to walk without speech; communication with nature and the open sky, or even silent oneness with a companion, apparently cannot be; they must continue constantly in chatter. But Andy's talk was not offensive, withal it was a monotone punctuated from time to time by his quaint expressions—"goggone it," "heck, y'know!" and the like. He told me Billy Brown, the brakie for most of the past thirty-three years on the Mazomanie-Sac Prairie run, was dead in his early fifties. Died a week ago today, he said. "He was a good guy. Goggone it, onct when he was up here and he seen me he says t' me, he says, 'What you doin', Andy?' and I says 'Nuttin' p'ticular,' and he says, 'Hop in and take a little ride,' and, by gosh all fishhooks! I took the run down t' Mazo with him settin' in

the cab, and come all the way back up t' Upper Sac Prairie while they was loadin' stock, and back to Lower Town again. Yes, sir, he was a good feller."

9 FEBRUARY: Jeb Sneeder came into the harness shop while Hugh and I were talking there this morning, and proffered a dog collar to be mended, the collar needing but a staple, a nickel's worth of work, and that an exorbitant price to ask, admitted Hugh. Jeb stood there near the stove, his watery but crafty eyes wandering about, his white moustache lending his face a benignity alien to it, his old clothes giving him a spurious humility. Hugh repaired the collar and handed it to him. "How much it is?" asked Jeb. "Oh, just a nickel," said Hugh. Jeb reached confidently for the pocketbook he had only just fifteen minutes ago pulled out under my eye in Kroger's store, to pay Hugh; then an expression of dismay came into his face, almost ridiculous in its patent exaggeration. "By golly!" exclaimed Jeb. "I must have forgot it. *Ich musz es etwo hingeleght ha'n.*" The pocketbook, of course, all this time reposed securely in Jeb's pocket. Hugh laughed, disdaining even to listen to Jeb's promise to come in later with the nickel, and both Hugh and I watched Jeb carefully in his meandering progress to the door, lest his *handy* fingers get away with a pair of gloves or a new pocketbook, but he, seeing us watch him, presently left with nothing more than the collar.

Before he had got quite away, Johnny Parr came in and said he was taking a Bible course. He said there were many things too deep for him to understand, but some day maybe he would grasp them. I suggested that Jeb needed conver-

sion, and that he might get to work on the old man, but Johnny shook his head solemnly and said one must use a little wisdom in such matters. "You can't cast your pearls before swine, you know, August," he said, apparently knowing of Jeb's propensity for appropriating any loose article lying around, as he has helped himself to countless garden implements from his neighbors' sheds, gardens, and lawns. But he was shocked, nevertheless, shook his head, and commented upon all the evil in the world. He stood about a little, taking everything very seriously, said he had a lot of work to do, but shied at helping Hugh, though he took very literally Hugh's joking suggestion that he do so. He said that the wooden horse on which Hugh was putting a harness was not likely to kick, but when I pointed out that Hugh ought to be less careless and not let the newly oiled harness hang so casually about the wooden horse's "tail end," for fear of the result of a sudden natural urge, Johnny fled.

Stopping in a little later to visit Eli at home, I talked about Jeb Sneeder, and Eli said he often came in to beg something, the last time a piece of cordwood, "or so," plainly for his own stove, out of which he said he wanted to make a "handle." "Sure," said Eli, "you can have one. But what do you want to make a handle for?" Jeb had apparently not thought this far, not having given Eli credit for inquiring; he put his hand to his head suddenly and said, "By golly, *Ich hab's vergessen. Ja, wenn Mann alt wirt—Ich bin dämlich ins Kopf!*" Jeb's mistiness of mind has produced for him many an unearned meal, opined Eli.

12 FEBRUARY: "February has nine days of thaw," say the natives solemnly, and already this is the ninth. Two days

of thick, muggy fog culminated this afternoon in a series of violent thunderstorms, during one of which I took refuge in the harness shop, and was followed in by a farmer, Gaylord Riordan, who went up to the bench where Hugh worked and began to talk to him. He was a tall, well-preserved man, with many gold teeth, few wrinkles, and graying hair. He bent his thin body over Hugh and exhorted him to consider the weather. "There ain't much frost left in the ground," he said. "I had to go out and get a load of sand, and just dug down about so far." He measured approximately a foot between his hands. "But this winter's sure been a bitch," he went on. "All ice." Hugh continued to work as if nothing but a wind blew at his ear, whereupon Riordan turned his attention to me and began a discourse on the value of foreigners. "You take them Germans up around Merrimac," he said. "They was all a pack of horse thieves, more'n likely. Over in Germany, a man didn't get pay enough to live with a family. He had to steal to live. If a farmer caught a man stealing the sheep he worked on, he never had him arrested; he got him so cheap to work, he made a big profit." He said that in the distillery, with which he appeared to be very familiar, the workers always put kegs of whisky in position over the floors, elevated on piling, and in the night would return, bore a hole up, and draw the whisky out. This promised to go on endlessly. Hugh looked up covertly from time to time, and made signs to say that there was little to distinguish the wind inside from that outside. Fortunately, a brief lull in the rainfall permitted me to escape, leaving Hugh to endure Riordan's wind alone.

14 FEBRUARY: St. Valentine's day and, it being also a convention day for teachers, the children took possession of the post office, much to the annoyance of old Menges and Puli, who eyed them in ill-concealed distaste. The children all anxiously awaited valentines, a score of them passing in and out all during the mail's distribution this morning. How obviously the boyish swain covertly eyed his sweetheart to learn if possible by any small sign whether she had yet received the valentine he had mailed to her!

At the harness shop this afternoon, Andy graphically launched into the telling of a tale about Albert Naro and Fred Glan, who had had a battle over the attentions the said Glan allegedly paid Naro's wife, Naro having attacked him in front of Bledsoe's Café, Glan having taken refuge there and been chased to the toilet, where Naro followed and proceeded to beat him up without hindrance, so that on Sunday and Monday—this having taken place Saturday night—Glan was unable to come to work. The episode being of some amusement, though not without a seamy side, Andy was upset about it. Nevertheless, he was excited. "You should a seen it," he said. "You know, when that Naro fights —he comes from Logtown, and out there they jest about live t' fight, you know—goggone it! I seen them fellers already from out there with part of a ear or a finger chewed off; that's the way they fight out there, yes sir. Heck, y'know, they'd jest as soon fight as eat—well, sir, you know, they says Naro jest took hold a Glan and hit him on the chin. 'This is a undercut,' he says. 'And this is a uppercut,' he says," Andy meanwhile somewhat awkwardly illustrating. "Fred, he run into Bledsoe's, figgerin' he'd git help, but, goggone it! Bled-

soe jest jumped up and down like a jackrabbit and hollered, 'Help! Help!' and Bert he chased Fred right out to the can, and Fred he figgered he could lock hisself in, but Bert he caught his foot in first, and, by God, he broke in and he beat him up for fair. Old Joe, he tried to stop it, but all he done was run back and forth in front a the can, and Bledsoe kept on jumpin' up and down and hollerin' for help. And they say Glan, he's sure beat up!" He shook his head and grinned, but in a moment remembered to add, "But that Tony Huerth fight—that was the best one yet, goggone it! You know, Tony he ain't much to fight, but he's strong as a bull, and one time some fellers took to teasing him, and they riled him up, and he lit into 'em and cleaned 'em all up, every last one of 'em." "How many were there?" asked Hugh. "Two," said Andy, "but they was tough," he hastened to add. But Hugh had already laughed, and Andy was properly miffed.

15 FEBRUARY: From Hugh this morning, I learned that I had missed an extraordinarily hilarious incident last night in the harness shop. Hugh's narrative was graphic. He and Pete were in the shop when Johnny Parr came in, urgently desirous of converting someone, whereupon Hugh turned him to Pete, suggesting that Pete sadly needed saving, and Pete, contrary to Hugh's expectations, played up to Johnny, lowered his eyes and shook his head sadly, admitting in a broken voice that, yes, he was probably a bad one. Johnny took it seriously; he was seized with an uncontrollable conviction of the urgent necessity of saving Pete from hellfire; he said breathlessly, "Wait, wait—I'll get my Bible!" and rushed from the harness shop, only to return within

a few moments with the Bible in his hands. Hugh, unwilling to submit to more of Johnny's soft-voiced preaching, set up a tremendous clatter and banging on his anvil, but Johnny held his arm gently, said, "Please be quiet now. Let the Word of God come through!" and proceeded forthwith to pray for strength before assailing the devil in Pete, who all this time kept up his aspect of mock humility and bemoaned his sins. After his short prayer, Johnny began to work on Pete; he told him of the great truths in the Book of Books, he spoke of his vision, and the beauty and power of the Word of God, and held forth some time before Pete interrupted him. Then it was to say, with properly humble hesitation, "Maybe you better talk to Hugh, too, Johnny. He comes down here Sundays to sew straps and stuff to get out of going to church!" Poor Johnny was torn between two desires, feeling himself incapable of converting both at once, and unwilling to relax Pete for the more obstinate Hugh. At this moment he, earnestly bewildered and undergoing this soul-struggle, was insidiously assailed by Pete, who innocently asked about birth control, whereupon Johnny started, looked vaguely about him, and said dubiously that that was part of the "Higher Law," but could not explain this. "God will provide," he said at last, provoking from Pete, "God don't seem to be putting bread and butter into a lot of people's mouths. How come?" So fairly caught, Johnny snatched up his Bible and left, still not realizing he had been duped, and unable to understand why he had failed; and so he will likely be amazed and bewildered by his vision and the failure of his earnest desire to convert Pete for many days to come.

22 FEBRUARY: At the school band concert this evening, the Band Mothers persisted, as usual, in selling candy before the concert began, with the result that audience noises vied with the music from number to number until toward the end of the concert, by which time the patrons had either eaten all the candy or were waiting lethargically for the concert to end. The result of this arrant stupidity can well be imagined, particularly in view of the fact that half the scheduled numbers were beginners' solos. The first soloist, little Miss Irene Grass, had no chance at all; not only did she suffer reed trouble, so that her melody constantly kept wailing off into bizarre notes, but her very first note was accompanied by the clink of coins, as one of the Band Mothers counted the proceeds of the candy sale, by a prolonged hiss from a radiator, a score of bags rattling as hands reached in for candy, and thirty programs rustling and crackling. To all this, of course, music was incidental. The child broke down in the midst of her solo, but pluckily began over, by this time no doubt accustomed to the vicissitudes of performing. The result was fully as unfortunate as her first attempt, and she left the stage in tears. Few solos were better; it was as if this first fiasco threw them all off, for none approached without trepidation, all eyed the audience with apprehension, and set forth with far too much vigor and went off key in the first few bars. Add to this that every solo was far too long, and the concert of candy bags, programs, and whispers continuing, the feelings of audience and performers alike needed no elucidation. So the program dragged dismally through to its end with only one bright note: following an interminable marimba solo, little Miss

Grass courageously got up to repeat her solo and did far better than anyone else.

25 FEBRUARY: In the post office this morning, old Puli complained that his light bill was too high, and Frank Schroeder, sitting next to him, asked him how much it was, his voice harsh with skepticism. "Sixty cents," whined Puli; the minimum charge. "We poor people have to pay it all." Frank took up the challenge and tried to explain to him that under the new rate, the customers actually paid less than before, after the fixed minimum charge. Puli, however, would not be convinced, not he. He kept mumbling stubbornly, "The paper shows it!" (presumably his light bill), until at last Frank, almost purple with anger, shouted, "Oh, you old fool! You don't want to see it or you ain't able!" and left off.

28 FEBRUARY: Johnny Parr came to the harness shop tonight, laden with books, among them *the* book, the "Good Book," apparently with the firm intention of converting me to Moody Bible Institute evangelism. Indeed, there was an exalted expression in his features, a raptness about his eyes, and his hair was slicked down with highly perfumed oil or tonic, and gleamed blackly in the yellow light shaded downward above the workbench. "I stand on the Bible," he said. "The Word is the Word, and it can't ever be changed. The Book stands; it's always been the same." He was faintly shaken when I reminded him that his St. James came from the Douay and this from the Vulgate, suffering many changes, but in a moment he threw off this shock. I asked him to

explain portions taken at random, but he could not. "I can't explain it, but I can stand on it. You got to have faith," he said urgently. "You got to believe in every word, or you can't be saved."

After a while he began to speak of the resurrection, and said that his hope was that he could live until the end of the world, so that he need not be put together again but could go straight to heaven. I could not resist asking him to explain the resurrection to me. I said that if he died and turned into dust and nourished grass which in turn was eaten by a cow, which in turn was eaten by me, and I died and so was devoured by Hugh, and thus onward, how was the Lord to separate what part of the final cycle's dust belonged to whom, to say nothing of the cycles before? He had not conceived any such contingency, and was plainly astonished and apprehensive. But at last he said blandly that all things were possible with the Lord, he didn't know how it was to be done, but He said it was and so it was. I took my leave, and returned after he was gone. Hugh said that after I had walked from the shop, Johnny had stood for some time in soundless contemplation, and then, sighing, had said, "That Derleth—he's a deep one!"

1 MARCH: Old Puli mourned the weather in the post office this morning. He was disgruntled by it, displeased by the soft south wind, the sunshine and the temperature at fifty; he averred that it was too early for spring, though he admitted that sixty years ago farmers were always in the field by the middle of March. But nowadays weather was different. "Late winter, late spring," he said. He did not seem to

think that this might change, and sat there grumping because it was too early for mild weather. And, indeed, the weather was mild; March came in drowsy on a southwest wind, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of wet earth and the freshness of spring.

4 MARCH: This morning in the post office, old Puli delivered himself of this sage reflection: "The ducks and the geese, when they come up too early, they go back—but the robins and the bluebirds, they're too dumb!" This was in the course of his expression of joy at last night's blizzard, which he maintained he had foreseen all along, as if the occurrence of this brief snow magically rectified any possible error among the seasons as he conceived them to be. I looked at him curiously from time to time and observed that whenever he was silent, his face habitually folded into an expression of dour sourness, his mouth downturned and every hair of his scant, closely trimmed moustache seeming to strike downward as if to emphasize the curve of his lips. I noticed how essentially small his eyes were, in contrast to the size of his head generally, and saw in his mouth and eyes an index to his nature. I could not help smiling at the squirrel tails attached to the sleeves of his greatcoat, and at his squirrel collar, and again at his pleasure in seeming right about the weather, and presently, still watching him, put down *Henry Puli.*

Old Puli sits and sits with rheumy eyes,
a dumpy man with whiskered face,
consults his book of daily skies,
and tells the time of storm, and place.

He sits each morning regular at nine
and waits to get his mail;
give him a glance, he'll know it for a sign
to tell you whether we'll have sun or hail.

He tells me what it means when nighthawk's wings
are loud by day, and how his gift came near him;
he knows that if the moon is clouded, dim,
we're in for storm and bluster; he says
that if Good Friday has some rain, the whim
of fate is for no more all spring. He says
that if the oak leaves turn in wind,
rain's bound to come, and if the sun shines
when it rains, sun gleams from thinned
and slowing drops, we'll have still more the morrow;
such signs,
he says, are never wrong.

Old Puli knows, will always know
that early springs are bound to bring May frost;
he knows that February rain will fetch an April snow
and tells you confidently when winter's lost
to spring.

But Puli has been wrong more often
than the weather,
and never turns a hair;
when sometimes he tells it right, abeam from crown
to worn shoe leather,
a joy it is to see him sitting there!

9 MARCH: In the drugstore tonight, heard how Old Zeppelina (Mrs. Conrad Tieman) on one occasion, when she still had the store where Eli's harness shop now stands, had in her window an array of women's pants, open, and just near by, a sign: "Open evenings."

In the same anecdotal vein, Erne mentioned that one day recently Mrs. Monti had come into Cunradi's and complained that her bitch was pregnant. "I can't understand it," she said. "I was so careful; I let her out only in the daytime and kept her home nights."

15 MARCH: On the way home from town today, I met and talked with Barney Merkel, who was standing on the corner looking toward the river from before the old library building. He shook his head and said that the old river days were gone. Time was, he said, when the river channel used to be on this side, and the rafts came down among the islands in swift, deep current. But these are gone now, the Wisconsin is a placid, much-dammed stream, and sandbars have replaced the island channels. The old man made an expression of distaste which did not vanish until he turned to contemplate his field on Water Street and conjecture what he might this year be putting into it.

16 MARCH: At von Wald's Confectionery, Nancy Lee Perry, speaking of her teeth, since she had been told she now had all her "baby teeth," turned to me suddenly and asked, "What kind of teeth have you got, August? Have you got papa teeth?"

In the harness shop Curley Prugh held forth on the most infallible sign of spring—the arrival of fishing and seed catalogues. He said he sent for every fishing catalogue he saw advertised, and spoke proudly of having a great number. He hoped, he said, that his cold would leave him before the fishing season began, but he had every reason to believe it would, what with Harold's medicine. "I says t' him the last time I was there, 'Doc, I don't know what you think of this medicine, but I sure set store by it!' I says t' him."

Dick Kuoni died today. I had not known his heart was so bad until this morning. Late this afternoon I called at the poultry house, where Nick sat alone, and talked with him briefly about Richard's condition, thinking a little illogically of his birthday evening last year and the old days remembered there. While I sat there, the telephone rang, someone ringing from the house. Nick looked at me, the knowledge in his eyes. "He's gone," he said. "I've been waiting for that all afternoon." In less than ten minutes, John Buerki came to the door and said sepulchrally, "He's gone, he passed away. Just now." It was five o'clock. John went out, and in a few moments Minnie Truckenbrodt came in, a little upset, saying she wanted a dozen eggs but had forgotten her purse, Nikki had it, wherever he was. "Well, Richard's gone," she said. "And Mrs. Giegerich got to see him yet. She came just in time. Emmy and I were sitting there, and we never noticed he was gone. Mrs. Giegerich said, 'Listen! He's not breathing any more.' 'Ach,' I said, 'it's just gone down a little.' 'No,' she answered. 'No, he's gone.' And, sure enough, he was. Well, it's for the best; the doctor said he wouldn't be the same again." I left, depressed, seeing Harold coming swiftly down Water Street toward the house as I walked away.

17 MARCH: Among the signs of spring this morning was old Menges, who sat in the sun on the bench at the elm beyond von Wald's and there slept, his hat tipped forward over his eyes, his almost toothless mouth agape, his hands laxly folded over his sunken paunch. A bluebottle fly danced on his hat.

20 MARCH: This morning the soft maples were all in full bloom, pale yellow and mauve against the sky, and incredibly beautiful upon the sun-held blue. I saw them first in the park, and then along all the streets where they grew. For blocks they shone yellow, a haze of color among the budding elms and oak trees.

21 MARCH: In the marshes this evening, while Hugh, Paul, and Junior walked ahead, I stopped on the Spring Slough trestle in the midst of bird-song and listened to the bell-like notes of the Hylidae, full-throated with spring, rising far stronger than the scattered notes of vesper sparrows, meadow larks, killdeers, and redwings, and singularly pleasant to hear there in the growing dark and the south wind blowing, and I did not go until I had written *Hylas.*

You would not think that anything
could be so weather-wise;
bogs, swamps and lowlands ring
early with piping cries.

At dusk their chorus praises last of day,
while quickly, quickly in the chill March air
the fragrant hint of May
fades into dark, where
all night the piping choir sings.

The wind blows north, the wind blows south,
but never wrests the breath from a least Hyla's mouth.

22 MARCH: Downtown this morning when Ilsa Lahman, wearing her new hat, an Alpine or Tyrolean bonnet, passed

old John (Damn' car no go!) Braun, he began to yodel in a shrill voice to command attention to her headgear. Though she seemed to ignore his thrust, she went white with rage and increased her pace, even briefly abandoning her medieval stairs walk.

23 MARCH: In Upper Sac Prairie this afternoon, I paused to visit briefly with Ellen Gundlach, who said she had not liked certain poems, some of the Maris poems, and added that she was praying for me every day and "offering up part of my Mass, that doesn't go to my girls." She would like a copy of the next book of poems, she said, but suggested that I "mark the poems that aren't nice!" She would have all my books, she said, but she would "just not read some parts." Dear, faithful soul, who would not offend her God while worshiping this clay!

25 MARCH: Shortly after dinner today, while I was at closet cleaning, cousins Lizzie and Polly came in from White Mounds to see grandmother, pausing in the kitchen to wait for her to awaken from her usual after-dinner nap. Lizzie, the always-dying one, began to talk of old days, and said I was always such a "rough one!" "My conscience! that boy was rough! I thought sure he'd kill someone some day, not knowing the strength in him." Neither of them had changed a whit. They were on the way to view the body of an aunt who had died. "Two aunts in a week," said Lizzie. "And if Aunt Lizzie dies it'll be three," said Polly. "Well, they have to make room for us old maids. And Aunt Lizzie's in her eighties now already." Cousin Lizzie looked at her with faint disapproval. As for one of the aunts who had died,

Polly said, "She wasn't by her mind. Why, some days she put on six or seven dresses, one over the other. And on the hot days she put on winter stuff, and the other way round. You couldn't hardly do nothing with her, she was so hard to handle!" When they had gone to sit with grandmother, mother shook her head and said, "Poor Lizzie! She won't last long, she looks so bad!"—that constant refrain now in its ninth year.

31 MARCH: March went out today like the traditional lion, with the temperature down to forty degrees and a high southwest wind raging—all to the comfort and pleasure of old Puli, who sat in the post office this morning smirking and grimacing and telling everyone with doleful pride that he had told them all, he had known it, it was bound to come: cold weather and snow, storm and ice. "The spring started too early," he said. How long he might have kept on, no one knows; but Hester Duff came in and took the floor, choosing to remember volubly an incident of some thirty years ago—how a span of the old bridge collapsed under a tractor being brought over by Henry Meyer and old Ninman, both of whom went through into the Wisconsin. "Ninman broke a rib," said Hester. "And you should have heard the crack it made! I heard it way down to my house!"

10 APRIL: At one this afternoon, I went into the marshes with Hugh by way of the east river bank. The day was warm but windy with one of those so-typical April winds, very fragrant, very exhilarating. We sat for a while in the sunlight at the woodland brook's edge, where mauve cotton-

wood catkins were beautiful against the sky. From the woods came the sound of a turtle complaining in his guttural chuckle and the voices of frogs. After half an hour here, we walked on. At the Spring Slough ten green-winged teal were congregated. We watched them for some time, while one venturesome drake swam boldly to the trestle and surveyed us with the utmost *savoir faire* before he gave a signal of alarm and flew up, followed by the others. Hawks quartered the meadows, bitterns flew heavily over the high grasses, and the song of meadow larks sounded all afternoon in the windy air.

11 APRIL: Going home from town late this afternoon, I was held briefly in the alley at Grass's by the sight of the Grass twins in the doghouse. They had managed to crawl into the small house with the eight puppies there, while the old bitch lay outside, watching them, but trusting them not to harm her progeny, which they did not, for no dog's complaint came from the house. At the moment that I saw them, the twins had apparently just completed settling themselves, had finished pushing from the house such surplus hay as they thought they could not use, and now sat with expressions of profound contentment on their fat, chubby faces, quite at home among the puppies. Outside, the bitch lowered her head to her paws and drowsed.

15 APRIL: Rain today, and the old folks say that this is a bad omen. "Rain on Good Friday, and all the rain the rest of the spring won't be much good!"—a superstition not often encountered before, but doubtless there are many

such, to be uncovered only by accident or by dint of much patience, which I do not possess. The rain made bright the squills blooming in grandmother Derleth's beds, and across the street at Lampertius's; and beside the harness shop the periwinkle opened to the falling drops.

17 APRIL: I noticed today how old Mack leans markedly to the right when he walks, where he uses his cane; he has come to depend upon it to such an extent that were he called upon to stand straight, as I have seen him, he stands so—leaning to the right from waist up—as he walks, always with the lean, so that it would seem to a careless observer that he was about to fall, and was saved only in time's nick by the judicious use of his walking stick.

18 APRIL: Early this evening, I sat for a while with grandfather Derleth, now in his eighty-fourth year. Sitting next to the window in the kitchen, he invited me to feel his muscle's firmness. "I've always been stronger in my left arm," he said. "And Charlie, too—strong as an ox!" He began to travel slowly back into his early years, remembering how he had gone out to work on the prairie as a boy, recalling the way he had hunted passenger pigeons, telling particularly about a small settlement of Sac Indians, about thirty huts, in the marsh—"Deininger's Marsh"—how he, as a boy of twelve or so, went to see them, calling especially upon an old Sac named Jerusha, as nearly as he could remember; this one took him into the bottoms and showed him how to take back home the way he had come, pointing out that the short grass was always stepped down, and the deep grass

had its blades turned. He took as much pleasure in this narrative as I in the hearing, and later at home I put down a poem celebrating *Grandfather at Eighty-Four.*

Still strong and proud, the heavy, thin-haired head
dark on the evening, dark,
deepening dark, he sits in dusk and sees
his years go down the orange west, beyond trees
motionless on the magenta sky, quiet
in the windless air.
"Mother and I," he says sometimes, and looks
then briefly at the empty chair
where grandma sat, and sighs
like sound of April in the pines.

I

"When I was young," he says,
"younger than you: fourteen—
I could have hardly been
that much—I went and was away
from home all night, all day,
months at a time in harvest.
I worked. I walked from one
farm to the next; I did my share.
That time father was already dead.
Nobody does that now," he says,
in mind's eye seeing again the boy he was:
well-muscled, strong: in sun and rain,
and never a road too long
for him: the small boy, sturdy, strong,

making his way, a song
for pain and loneliness:
saving his pay,
a dollar a day,
half for his mother.
"That was the way I went
each fall; that way I spent
the harvest time."
Flexing his muscles now,
remembering, he smiles.
Under the linden bough
the streetlights wink, come on;
the afterglow draws down
the west.

II

"A boy, I went to the meadow where
the last Sacs were: some thirty huts or so," he says.
"Of Indians only young men wore red
paint, and the oldest one—Jerusha, called—
beckoned to me: 'You 'long, boy,' he said."

And he went.

He learned the way
of mouse and hare in the deep-grassed
marsh, and how the field could say
which way he passed.

"You 'long, boy;" and he went.

Sitting now in dark even if unbent
by years, he knows where
Jerusha went:
where he too will go, under the grass, and he
thinks often now of where
Jerusha waits to say in his deep slow
speech, "You 'long, boy."

And he will go.

III

His slow smile fades, and sadness comes, the age,
the loss of time. "Never again," he says.
"You never can hear that sound
made by their wings, nor see their shadow covering
the ground.
Ah, those days!" And, shaking now the old, sage
head, looks back, begins to sigh
in wonder at the way in which so many thousands came
to die.

"In those days," he says,
"we went out in sunlight after snow."
He says this, smiling to remember.
That would have been first snow, December.
"The pine limbs hung heavy, low
with weight of birds," he says.
A silver and cobalt sea in winter sky:
passenger pigeons: birds blind
with snow and sun on snow-thick limbs.
"That way they will never be

again. Anywhere after snow,
we could find them, and we could go
to the woods and pick them off," he says.
"With bare hands." His gnarled fingers make the motion: so—
And he smiles.

Nodding now at edge of sleep, eyes closed to years:
"Thousands—thousands there,
and sound of wings—wings in air—
—Never again—
Never—ah, no never!"

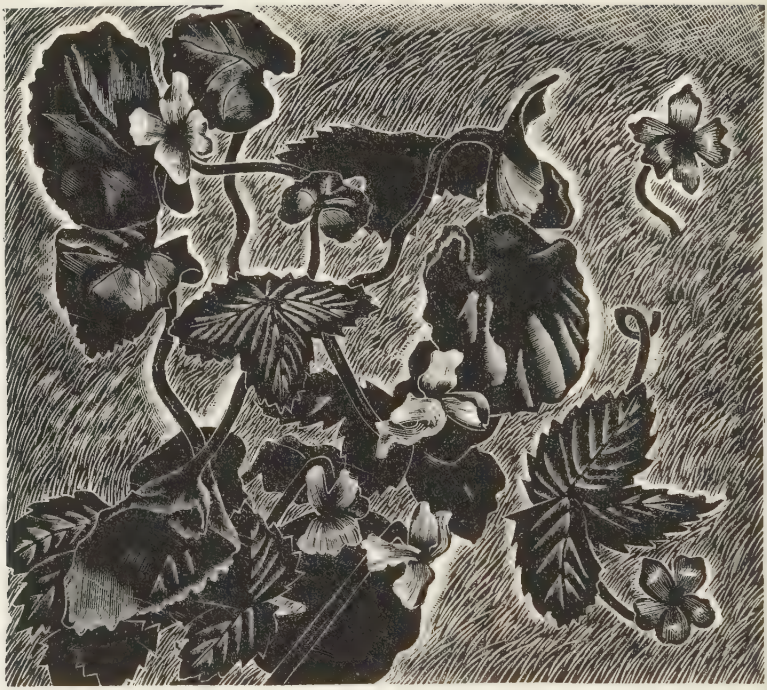
26 APRIL: This morning while I stood talking with Hugh in the harness shop, a car drove up, Roman Blankenheim appeared briefly at the door, and presently in came Eli, his face glowing at sight of the shop, despite the tribulation of crutches. It was the first time since his accident almost four months ago that he had been down. He went up to his old place, noticing at once that one of the stitching-horses was gone, and inquired about it as he sat down, took off his hat, opened the drawer beneath the workbench there, and took out his asmodor, which he promptly lit, so that the shop presently began to smell as of old, and the green smoke hung about his bent head. Hugh found his spectacles, and Eli put them on. At last, looking up, he said, "Now I can hear the martins, anyway!"

1 MAY: At seven this bright, sunny morning, to the bottoms with Hugh, he after asparagus, myself birding. Of not too

often seen birds, the casual penetration of Bergen's Island revealed a blue goose, several orange-crowned warblers, a pigeon hawk, a whippoorwill, a Carolina woodpecker, and a blackburnian warbler. While in the vicinity of Dead Dog Hole, where Hugh augmented his already great store of asparagus, I sat on the sandy bank under a cottonwood tree and wrote *Fifth Month Morning.*

Cottonwood leaves quiver and bend in the east
wind, and chewinks call.
Here on the river's edge the maples hold the age
of fall
in early garment; the birch trees,
yellow still with catkins, draw the bees,
and mourning doves cry and cry,
with the early sun on their breasts,
and no cloud in the sky.

2 MAY: Late this afternoon, while I sat in the dip on the Big Hill, I was interrupted by a scrabbling sound on the south slope, and, looking up cautiously, I saw a woodchuck climbing slowly into the oak about forty feet downhill. Watching him, I observed that he reached out his black paws to bring to his mouth the new oak leaves and unopened buds, which he devoured greedily, but fastidiously. Seeing me at first gave him no cause for alarm, though, in the alert manner of all wild creatures, he turned from time to time to look at this excrescence on the hilltop and scrutinize it carefully for any change in contour or position. After fifteen minutes, I so far forgot myself as to raise my hand, where-



upon he flattened his brown body instantly against the tree, stayed motionless for a few seconds, and then scrambled quickly down the tree to vanish in the grass downhill.

13 MAY: In the village today the first bridalwreath opened, heavy fragrance spreading quickly. Elm seeds littered the gutters, brown in trees and lawns, and the maple seeds were dry, too, and came down as heavily. A few children still carried the early green maple seeds—the "squirters," pinching them to force the sweet liquid to jet forth. A southwest wind blew all day, carrying the fragrance of plum and

cherry bloom, and the wild crab apple's nostalgic perfume from the country lanes.

14 MAY: While I stood this evening to talk with Bernice Zauft and Erna Johnson, on Water Street, hearing Erna tell that her nickname had once been Mousie, now somewhat out of physical proportion, Elvirah Gruner went by with her young man. "She's engaged," said Erna. The young man was a stranger—round-shouldered, dark, almost primitive in appearance, with a hangdog sort of look. Beside him, Elvirah walked, with her simpering smile, her broad masculine face, her watery eyes; or rather, she led him by a stride or two. They went up and down Water Street, and twenty feet behind them trudged her mother, thick-set old Mrs. Gruner. The young man did not mind or was too slack-witted to understand how amusing was the picture he presented. For ten years Elvirah has tried to get a man, any man, old or young, and at last success has crowned her efforts, and those of her mother. For two hours they walked Water Street, the old lady always behind by twenty or thirty feet and never once with her eyes away from them, all this to make manifest Elvirah's conquest.

At eleven-thirty tonight rode to the Ferry Bluff with Don and Laura. The night was singularly lovely, the moon holding the river's surface in a bright wind-made sheen, the whippoorwills singing from the dark hill's head and from Laws' Landing across the Wisconsin the wild crab apple spectral with moonlight in its pink blossoms. Fish played in the river, rising to the surface and splashing secretly there; across, on the east shore, mists rose ghost-like from the water. I got out of the car and walked down the shadow-

flecked path at the river's shore and the bluff's edge, leaving Don and Laura in each other's arms, and, standing in the soft wind, thinking of Margery, of Maris, of Don and Laura as symbolic of all young lovers oblivious of time and its swift, inimical passing, I wrote by moonlight for them, *All Young, All Lovers.*

O white, O ageless dream:
the silent moon
upon the river silver lies,
the current deep, the current secret, still,
past shade of shadowed slopes where whippoorwill
sings lonelily and cries
the solitary owl, soon
answered:
moonlit, deep secret stream,
where wild, the sweet crab apple glows
there ghost-like, and the wind
comes plangent from the west to thin the thin, already thinned
sweet bloom, and spread where flows
the stream the moonlit, purling gleam
of ripple, bubble, eddy's edge.

Late frogs cry, cry,
the turtles chuckle, and the spring
bears heart and mind abroad, gives wing
to pulse of blood, and I
in darkness under ledge
of years, go back and forward, back,
and see all young, all lovers there,
endless at their walking up and down

such ledge-paths, lanes, such tree-naved streets in
country, town,
sheathed in the lilac-honeyed air—
none turned, none turning, no none looking back
to count the laid of love in earth: hand-clasped, lip
to lip, eye
to eye that fathoms love with love, all unaware,
where love is time, time lasts as love does last,
that time shall come, time once be past;
none turned to first of time to know time's end, time
last:
who know as moon and star, as tree and bird, the
flower—
untried of time, unfathomable but to love, the keep of
love, bright
with its inextinguishable own light—
all lovers' ageless place, the heart of May.

All young, all lovers in the mind's eye
passing, all ecstasy
of heart and agony spectral as the tree
that petals wind, the windy sky,
widely where, like love, the river goes
secret with song among the rocks, and flows
in light where stands the night transcendent over day.

O white, O ageless dream:
held in this aged vacancy
of air,
caught in this memoried place
where all young, all lovers are,
mind and heart alone, apart, apart and far:

I stand, and briefly do not know the race
and flight of time, in mind's eye seeing all the fair,
all young, all lovers: knowing but the whispering wind,
the lonely whippoorwill,
the swamp owl's cooing like a dove
at sinking sun, in love with love,
the plangent night's still
murmuring:

moonlight singing in the apple tree, thinned
of spring's first blossoming by wind, moonlight on the
grass like rime
of late May frost:

O white, O ageless dream!
all young, all lovers,
and the hawk of time that hovers, hovers,
hangs with no haste, no hour lost:
moon-prisoned briefly in the pocket deeps of time—

O white,
O ageless dream:
river, last of blossoms . . .
last of blossoms, night . . .

15 MAY: Walking with Effie, Harold, and the boys along the Cactus Bluff ledge this afternoon, I came suddenly upon Hugh and Pete lying beside a fire under the ledge. Hugh was barefooted and somewhat disheveled, and Pete was grinning almost maliciously. "Why aren't you fishing?" I asked. "Oh, the mermaid fell in," answered Pete airily; he was amused, because it has always been Pete who falls in.

He went on to explain that their contemplated day of fishing had got off to a singularly bad beginning. On his second cast, Pete lost a plug in a tree. On Hugh's first cast, he bent on a rock to pull up his boots and, getting some water down his legs, thought it would do no harm to step out a little more; this he did, thinking to go down half a foot or so, and went down to his neck. So now the two sat on the ledge waiting for Hugh, "the mermaid," to dry out.

17 MAY: After eight hours of heavy rain this morning, with water deep in field, gutter, lawn, and ditch, Circ, passing me on Water Street, said gravely, "It's quite moist."

19 MAY: A wind tonight, and the moon shining brightly. The air was fragrant with the honey of lilacs, and all the village filled with that eternal restlessness of spring at its height. The young girls went up and down the streets, with their laughter in the wind, and the old people sat on porches and watched visions of their youth going by all over again. I paused beneath an avenue of aromatic maples and wrote *May Night.*

for Lois, Marie, Meg and June,
seen under the May night moon.

Thin laughter floating under the trees,
the young girls walk in twos and threes.

Cowbells echo from another year,
and old men from the farms
sit on their porches to hear
how past years sound again.
Clouds promise rain

that does not come. All night long
the peewee sings his song
among the apple blossoms, wind
carries fragrance of plum and lilac never thinned
from dark to dark.

In the sweet evening air
where flowering currant, where
the cherry trees
are host to them in their twos and threes,
the young girls go arm in arm
aware of no harm.

Before dark comes down
and lurks among the town
in streetlight glow,
children play still,
young voices shrill.

The young girls go up and down, all evening long,
thin voices making wordless song,
and streets are brighter
for the flower of their eyes,
and night more alive for their stifled cries.

Past lilac where the honey bee
clings all night, past darkening houses, up and down,
they go,
one and two and three—and the pulse beats fast,
oh fast where they go past—
young girls and their thin laughter
and all the May gone after.

28 MAY: On the embankment below the brook this afternoon I sat with Gerry watching a woodchuck run along the tracks, pausing every little while to sit up on his hind legs to gaze back at us. But presently he had vanished, startled by someone coming from the opposite direction. It was Climmer, who had fortunately not seen the woodchuck, or his illegal trapping activities might have been given new life. He said he had been getting asparagus, but was "all et up by mosquitoes," though he was so heavily clothed that any mosquito which had succeeded in penetrating to his hide must be possessed of drilling apparatus beyond my feeble conception. He had a little asparagus, but ignored other stalks growing in plain sight of where we stood, so that it occurred to both of us after he had passed to wonder whether he had come down to look after his traps or whether he actually sought asparagus.

29 MAY: With Ella and Leo Weissenborn, I walked today along the lower mill road. Ella told of a visit she had on one occasion made to Adele Stahndorf, a lady who considered herself well born and was therefore very haughty. Ella was told by her mother that Adele might not know the name Weissenborn, but surely she would know that of Heller; so that when she met the lady, she must identify herself as Ottilia Heller's daughter. Stung by Mrs. Stahndorf's imperious, "I am Adele Stahndorf. Who, then, are you?" she replied instantly, "I am Ella Weissenborn by Julius Weissenborn out of Ottilia Heller!" On still another occasion, while visiting there with her mother, Ella was much put out because her hands were compared unfavorably with those of

the Stahndorf daughters, whereupon Ella at last flared out, "Yes, I can't always play the piano. *I* must work."

10 JUNE: Joe Schmidhofer stopped me this morning downtown and told me that last night he had been sitting quietly in the dark of his garden when suddenly he was struck on the side of his head. He looked around and got up to search for any interloper, but could see no one. Hardly had he reseated himself, however, when he was struck again, this time on the other side of the head, and hard enough to break the skin. A little alarmed now, he got up to look around again and just missed being struck a third time by the screech owl near whose young he had unwittingly chosen to rest.

11 JUNE: This evening to the Village Hall to attend a class reunion, and found there not only the class, some twenty-odd years before my time, but practically all available parents and teachers, so that a class of eight, with but six members present, had a reunion of thirty-four people. Apparently I came in under the dubious classification of the local school system's "most distinguished graduate." The dinner was good enough, but the price was too high, for it was followed not only by singing, but by almost interminable speeches by every conceivable person, including most of the class members, who were called upon to relate their memoirs, a number of which were passable, and also the mother of one of the boys, who, in the absence of her son, related several anecdotes about him, followed by several more all more or less in this vein: "Then there was that time when one of the boys had a birthday party. I remember

that time, and I must tell it yet. That was the time the creamery burned down. That was some fire, and it was the night of his birthday party. My neighbor's little girl went down to it, and the reason I remember it so well is that she came back with a piece of melted glass or copper or bronze or I don't know what and she tied a ribbon around it and on it put a piece of paper with the date on it. And I have it here if you all want to look at it after while." This went on for some time, and I thought she would never end, though I enjoyed some portions of her rambling serial, but at last, with a queer, defiant glance at me, she said courageously that she would read a poem, or rather, recite one—"I'm no great reader, but I *can* recite poetry once in a while." Then followed various soli by voices for the most part too untrained to dare the public ear, but blithely doing so nevertheless, and then more memories. Finally, after two and one-half hours of this, I felt that I had adequately atoned for a year's sins, excused myself and left, barely able to navigate.

15 JUNE: With Carl, Gerry, and Ray late tonight to the far side of Minette's Hill, where we paused to listen for whip-poorwills, and began to count, striving as always to equal Burroughs' 1088 consecutive calls without pause. Almost incredibly, I counted 611 consecutive calls, the closest I have so far come to Burroughs, and this was all the more remarkable since the bird was slow and deliberate in his calls, unlike most of the others crying in the Pocket. On the hilltop, we paused once more, listening again, while looking westward to where Sac Prairie lay twinkling and gleaming with streetlights on the river's edge as in a bowl, with hills

all around the paw of land, and the highways marked by the lights of cars moving to and from the Baraboo Bluffs and out into the west country. But no whippoorwill called more than two hundred times before breaking the flow of his cries.

18 JUNE: I learned today that Lina Beldon, who cannot read or write, is thought safe to be trusted with notes to deliver, and is therefore given messages of all kinds to carry to and fro. Lina, however, carries them all straight to Mrs. Bland before delivering them so that Mrs. Bland can read them to Lina. Since Lina does not gossip, this must surely be a kind of compensation for her inability to read and write, a lessening of her frustration, thus secretly to learn what correspondence passes among her neighbors and their friends.

20 JUNE: Grandfather came up for dinner this noon. He was in fine form today, reminiscing about many people and incidents. He was particularly bent upon recalling the old-time medicine wagon, which made the rounds in much the same manner as the butcher's wagon, and contained herb remedies, hair tonics, liniments, soporifics, et cetera, smelling pleasantly of mints, sweet basil, and other herbs. The medicine wagon came with fair regularity through the village and along the country roads, its only competition among the Indians, who made up herb brews and packets of herbs and wild roots with medicinal qualities, and went from door to door selling them. This was in the 1850's and 1860's. The medicine wagon was the immediate predecessor of the Alpenkräuter salesman, such as old Mike, who went

up and down the country carrying his stock on his back: symbol of a time long past, lingering still in the memories of the old.

Grandfather spoke of old Charlie Kraft, who was always on the street scratching at his abdomen, frequently opening the buttons of his trousers in his absentmindedness, so that his daughters were in a constant state of nervousness watching his trousers and hoping to warn him, yet trying to pretend that they were not watching for fear that someone might see them, they not knowing whether it would be worse to be seen watching their father's trousers, or frankly to have the trousers seen open. He also mentioned Hank Asper, and I remembered how Hank had hanged himself because his wife and daughter would not let him vote for Roosevelt, and thus took two votes from Hoover, since they could not violate village conventions by going to vote on the day after his death.

21 JUNE: I paused to call on Emmy briefly this morning. She said that one of her neighbors did nothing but complain of how hard he must work at the canning factory: he who has never done any real work in his life, complaining because he knows for the first time what long hours are, though he actually does no hard work. Apropos the plaintiff, I told her that Curley Prugh, having become exhausted while pitching peas into the viners the previous day, had called the manager and told him he would have to have a different job at least for a while, but protested the proposed shifting of him to the warehouse at a job that would tax the same muscles. "Well, I'll have to get somebody in your place," said Bill. Stung, Curley snapped, "Go and get 'im right now. Get one

of those two white-collar friends of yours with their soft jobs and put him up here!"—the plaintiff being one of them.

Beneath the catalpa at Emmy's this morning, the blossoms lay white as snow, a great circular carpet of them, with no blossoms fallen outward because of the windless air during their falling all day yesterday.

22 JUNE: I stopped briefly this morning at Schorer's to partake of cake, and sat at table talking with Annie and Wanda Hoppe, in the course of which small talk conversation turned to old-time German expletives. "My mother always said she could scold better in German," said Wanda. "There were more words!" She mentioned some of them, and instantly made me to remember grandmother Derleth's colorful words hurled good-naturedly at me from time to time—*Kalbmoses, Rindsphüge, Kaffir, Esel, Aff, Sempel,* and *Rindsgepittel.*

23 JUNE: All morning loads of clover and hay went past the house. The heat of the past few days has dried all cut fodder swiftly, and today the streets are fragrant with the sweet odors of dried grass and clover lingering where loads have passed, perfume in clouds beneath the overhanging trees in the still summer air. At the edge of the village the corn, after three days of intense sunlight, is far more than knee-high. "Knee-high corn by July fourth is good corn," say the natives.

26 JUNE: Up and to Mass, where I was much amused by Father Brockman's brief address anent the Pope's need of funds; he said at one point that the Pope needed money to

train young priests to disguise themselves and go into Russia to work there "in an underhand manner."

Returning from the marsh this afternoon, I met on the highway bridge Mrs. Bartosch and Rita. Seeing that I carried an elder blossom picked from among the hundreds crowding the roads and sweetening air, Mrs. Bartosch said that she ate them, dipping them into an egg batter and preparing them in deep fat, like French toast. "The flavor's just like the blossom," she said. I pressed her for more details, but she said there were none. "That's all there is to it. It's an old recipe."

29 JUNE: Old Mrs. Stillman was found dead in her bed this morning; she was ninety-three and had been ailing for some weeks, so that her death was not entirely unexpected. I was sorry to learn of it, for her chunky, bent figure was one of the first to impress itself upon my mind, among those of the old women, and her weird, uncanny whispering, the mindless voice heard unexpectedly, suddenly in dark spring nights, is not to be forgotten. I do not think she ever changed; she looked the same in all the twenty years I remember her, no further age setting its mark upon her features, no added line among the wrinkles there, the face at first glance giving no indication of the pockets of her mind and what lost thoughts lingered there. I have forgotten how often I came upon her in some street distant from her home, her forearms rolled up in her apron as she shuffled along, bent forward a little, as fast as she could go, always mumbling and talking to herself, and how often, not far behind her, met her daughter or her granddaughter in frantic pur-

suit to lead her back home. But most clearly of all, I remember encountering her at night, in the block near the old red brick house, standing in the shadow of budding elms, looking up past the streetlight toward the stars, her eyes distant, her face at rest, despite the voice that came ceaselessly, scolding, cajoling, begging, sometimes in German, sometimes in English, though words were seldom coherent. The sound of her voice lingered in that darkness, and lingers still: a breathless, whimpering sound that fell into the spring wind, the April air, and belongs there. Now at last she rests; her wandering from home is done; she will not again need to protest against being led unwillingly back to the old red brick house, her shrill voice rising and falling, angry and grieving.

1 JULY: I observed this morning downtown that the centennial fever had begun to spread. Following the pattern of Sac Prairie, Baraboo recently decided to have a centennial, though that village is but ninety years old. Nevertheless, they got out bumper cards, and I saw the first one in use today, a card boldly proclaiming Baraboo's *90th Centennial Anniversary*—the boys apparently made the mistake of not looking up a twenty-five-cent word when they had occasion to use it.

2 JULY: I received in the morning's mail a needlessly anonymous letter of affection addressed to Prof. August Derleth in a crabbed hand familiar to me—*Say Augie, I just now found out how you contucted your self at the 25th anniversity panquet of the gratuate's the way you sneaked out after you had your stomack filled. You surely havennt*

got any manners and the way you where dressed every body made a remark about it, and I hear nobody paid no attention about you. You really aught to get out of town and learn some manners it sure is a discrace to see you run around. The whole town talks about it if you but knew how the people talk about you you surely would take a sneak. But you have no shame. This cheering missive did its bit to enliven an otherwise muggy, close day.

3 JULY: Pausing at the Roxbury picnic grounds this afternoon, while in Don's company, I talked with his mother and aunt, the two of whom recalled how Cap as a boy went into Old Zeppelina's store and was invariably offered a piece of a certain kind of candy until, on one occasion, he innocently asked, "Why don't you give me some of that kind?" pointing to a variety he liked better, whereupon Zeppelina shot him a sharp glance and said curtly, "So! Then you shan't have any!" Nor did he ever receive a piece of candy thereafter.

I mentioned Emmy Schönfeldt's store, and Lily said that the old store was a favorite among the children of her day, for one reason in particular—that, when the old lady "rushed the can," that is: went for her glass of beer—she usually sent the nearest available child for meat for her dog: "*Fünf zent Puppy-Fleisch!*" and the child was treated on his return, for Mrs. Schönfeldt was not niggardly.

At Nolden's tonight, I learned from Mrs. Williams that young Teddy had come into the house reciting an off-color poem. She protested. "You mustn't say that to anybody; it's naughty." "Yes, but, Mother," he replied, "don't it rhyme nice!"

4 JULY: This celebrated, glorious day began auspiciously. To the constant noise of firecrackers, shot chiefly by addlepates long before children were out of bed, grandmother Volk took a turn for the worse and, beginning at four o'clock, there was a round of telephoning and cars driving up: the doctor, the priest, relatives. When Harold had finished his examination of her, he looked at me and shook his head a little; so that we might know this was the beginning of the end.

I noticed this morning the odd, subdued half-purring sound the cat makes when returning to her kitten: announcing her arrival in reassuring tones, as it were. She proceeds immediately to wash the kitten, as if it might have been sullied during her absence.

5 JULY: In midmorning, just as I was on the way downtown for the mail, grandmother Volk died. Summoned by mother, I went into her little house and found her hunched easily on her right side, far down in the bed, and breathing very shallowly: her breath "in her throat," as aunt Annie said; and indeed, so it was, coming at long intervals. After every breath, which blew her faintly discolored lips out, a light smile touched her mouth, as if she slept within a pleasant dream. In five minutes she had ceased to breathe; she was dead, very quietly and peacefully, and I thought of how kind she had always been, of how many times she had urged upon me the few coins she could spare so that I might buy magazines and books when I wanted them, of how she, and for a long time she alone, had believed in me and the work I meant to do, confident that some day I

would justify her faith in me as symbol of her belief in education, which she never had, and none of her children had because she was too poor to send them on to school. Her life was in its quiet way an inspiration. She loved life even at its most unkind, she loved people, she loved joy and laughter, perhaps because so much of her own time was tempered with sorrow, from the trials of childhood without a father on the homestead, to the tribulations brought on by her churlish sister in her late years. I went back into the house and began to call the relatives.

When I came home to supper this evening from the hills, I found cousin Kate there. "Hoh! now we can pray!" I said, and teased her gently about her fondness for prayer; but she enjoyed it, cracking back often and tellingly enough. I warned her at supper table not to remember cousin Caspar and his sudden death and start weeping, for, I said, there would be no tears shed at this death, grandmother having had a full life and a comparatively peaceful end, and would not be wishing us to carry on, whereat cousin Kate was both astonished and amused. "My Cap," she said, shaking her head sadly. "Ah, there was never a man like Cap, and I'll always be true to him. He used to say to me I was like a rose, and sometimes he called me his rose!" Her eyes sparkled at the memory of it, though her tears were not far away. But she did not weep.

6 JULY: The Volk clan began to gather today. Before last midnight, uncle John, uncle August, and aunt Ella had come in, following aunt Bertha, and today the advance guard of relatives from Plain came, cousin Lizzie in the lead, herself complaining of illness and telling us that cousin Polly, who

had wanted to come, had that day just escaped breaking a leg when she went through the hayrack, and "had more luck than sense," because the fork fell right after and just missed her. Father Forester came up at eight to lead in prayer, myself declining to join in, saying jocularly that I must stand outside and chase the Protestants away, and joining our non-Catholic friends and relatives on the back porch. However, the best "rosary-prayers" in the region were in the house. As the full tide of relatives came in from all sides, I fled.

7 JULY: Grandmother was buried this morning; she had the big funeral she had always wanted. It was not long in process, and soon we were filing out of the cemetery. Cousin Kate delivered herself of the opinion that it was "terrible the way nobody cried," by which the dear good soul meant that she had not had ample opportunity to remember Caspar and shed tears in his behalf.

10 JULY: While listening to Bruckner's *Romantic Symphony* this morning, I wrote *Elegy: Midsummer Eve,* a memorial poem to grandmother Volk.

Mint-sweet with dusk and arc-lit air,
midsummer eve, midsummer eve:
the lonely cry of whip-poorwill
stirs restlessness, stirs, widens depth of darkness in the well
of dark, untenants night of other sound, the heart of quiet, and the mind:
and plumbs the unplumbed deeps of heart and time . . .

Mint-sweet with dusk and arc-lit air,
midsummer eve, midsummer eve:
here in air
fragrant with linden bloom, I pause, turn upward on the stair,
eye darkness and in dark the heart's deep grief, the trough and swell
of grieving heart's unsteady, sea-like time, where still
your dear face lingers, where still are dim the patient eyes,
pale eyes of blue, the warm, the ever constant smile,
and still soundless speaks in silent words the aging voice so gently there.

So midway, midway in the stream, the flux, so stands the heart that is the man,
the dark of dynasties and buried Ilium more present than the walls, the stair;
so midway in the flux, the stream of time, midway on the steps
the living man before death pauses, on his way to death and bed,
and knows refreshment of your faith, your strength,
and passes age, and passes death, and is renewed as boy, as youth,
ageless in heart's grief and memories on the stair.

Midsummer eve, midsummer eve,
mint-sweet with dusk and arc-lit air:
the streetlights
now abloom

in shadowed streets where once you walked and now
grief trudges up the stair,
the moonlight streaming down among the garden
bloom,
the moonlight lying yellowly in house, in room,
where once your song, your laugh rang out, you whis-
pered, talked:
and I, between the walls of time, upon
the rising stair, intimate with song of bee
and bird in grassy field, intimate with sound
of night, day's murmur in the country, in the town—
I stand and face a deeper dark, a darker mystery than
day,
a light more dim than daylight is, and surer than the
night . . .

Midsummer eve:
last bird in budding tree, night's mur-
mur in the town:
I stand for one last backward glance, look far into the
heart, look down
into the deeps of grieving dark, before I turn, before
I mount the mound
where darkly death looms
in some nameless street, some corridor, in rooms;
I stand less surely than a tree,
a dusty locust in a roadside ditch, prey to wind,
prey to chance, marauding hands as destiny—
named shape of nameless, noble clay upon the brink of
noble, nameless night, of unnamed day's
last step of living flesh, breath's haze.

Alone, I turn, fed now by memory; alone, I mount the dark before,
with lesser darks behind, toward thinned and thinning years.

Sweet as mint with scented dusk, arc-lit, and night
now coming on: midsummer eve, midsummer eve:
here last your face, here last your voice, your smile,
where living lips break peace in arc-lit dusk that scents the room . . .
Midsummer eve, midsummer eve:
I turn, move upward on the stair,
I mount the gloom
toward answers to unquiet questions in the quiet of the heart . . .

Late tonight, after eleven, drove with Ray to the Ferry Bluff and then back across the Wisconsin to the old place below Hiney's. The countryside under the moon was disquietingly beautiful, fields ghost-white with ripe grain, some already cut and shocked, meadows over which fog was beginning to move, hills dark upon the sky, and all air sweet with the fragrance of hay and clover, alfalfa, mint, yarrow and cornleaves. At the Ferry Bluff, fog lay lightly over against Laws' Landing, the moon shone on the untroubled water to the south, mellow light lying beautiful among the trees along the river's shore, and like witchfire dancing furtively on isolated trunks and foliage above the dark, unlit water of the sloughs north of the road. Whippoorwills cried at the bluff and again from the meadows at the old place,

where fog, too, lay over earth, and trees rose from it as from a lake. Here, in celebration of Maris, I wrote by moonlight *Shy Bird.*

The long ledge path, the river and the sky,
with curls of smoke in it (where do they go to die?):
these I remember and the talking of eyes without a word
spoken. I think of loneliness as a shy bird
caught and set free and caught again.
The ledge path curved up and down like a lane
to the blue and away. I cannot remember
whether trees grew there, whether May or November
or another month. I know again how from the hill,
swinging away and back again, the whippoorwill
started up and returned to the dark land,
and how you and I held in one cupped hand
the shy bird and set it free again, knowing
how we would turn to it again with years growing
older behind us, and take it again where it comes, still
as on the soundless wings of the whippoorwill.

12 JULY: I heard downtown today that, after the Cubs had lost another game, their great champion, Jettyx, had closed his ears with cotton-batting, that he might shut out the jibes and laughter teasingly directed at him. I saw him a few moments later, and, indeed, it was so; he strode past with a wide grin on his face and cotton showing whitely in his ears.

13 JULY: During a centennial committee meeting tonight, one of the local ministers appeared and summoned me forth. He wished to complain about the carnival-like concessions granted to Lower Sac Prairie, and made a great stir and dither about games of chance and the like. I walked up and down the street with him, while the committee fumed, striving to mollify him, and pointing out that if people wished to play games of chance, they would do so whether or not we said they might. He departed at last, somewhat mollified but fundamentally unchanged in his views. I explained to the committee what had taken place, and prophesied that we would hear from him again, as soon as he could find something else about which to complain.

14 JULY: On my way downtown this morning, Gus Hantselmann called me in to see his new potatoes. He and his mother had been at them the best part of the day, and there they lay, the product of one of his patches, all neatly sorted out, the old lady going over them now with a stiff broom to clean them off. "Nothing like that wet dirt to make them rot in the cellar," said Gus, speaking first German and then English. The largest potatoes had already been put aside "for seed," the medium-sized potatoes "for eating," the smallest

for *"die Hühnner."* The potatoes lay on the old-fashioned board walk beneath the heavy foliage of the grape arbor which rises on both sides of all the board walks around the old house, all fenced in by one of the few remaining horizontal board fences. The atmosphere was old, very old, pre-1870, and into it Gus and his mother fit admirably. This morning Gus expatiated at great length on the value of different potatoes, proudly telling how he had bought his best ones cheaply when a store changed hands, "and if we have only a quarter as many potatoes off the seed as we did off the first seed last year, we'll eat good all winter." *"Und die Hühnner auch,"* added the old lady with a dreamy expression of satisfaction in her old, sunken, but still alert eyes. "Now we'll keep them in the cellar, it's nine feet deep, and up against that north wall, why, say, you know, no light ever hits 'em, they'll keep that way for a long time, a long time." I stood fulsomely admiring the potatoes and drinking in the cool aura of age there before I went out again into the hot sunlight and clamor of the village streets.

16 JULY: From my desk this morning I saw how a squirrel came down from one of the hackberry trees before Diehl's house across the street, dug up a little earth in a place which workmen recently filled, and rolled himself in the broken earth, much in the manner of a cat or dog rolling in the grass. I watched him for some time before he gave over his rolling and started off up the street, flirting his tail, as if in satisfaction.

17 JULY: Up and to Mass at seven, where I sat watching people come in late—the McMahon and Riley families, who

come late nineteen times out of twenty, and straggle in one at a time, save for the girls and their mother, who go up front, while the boys, a low mental type for the most part, push arrogantly into any pew that takes their fancy, no matter how crowded it might already be; farmer Weynand, in a black coat and white collar, small and hurried and with the appearance of having been starched into his clothes; Mike Lamberty, going into the seat just ahead, without his wife now, pausing to look carefully around him after genuflection. The sermon this morning was on the subject of giving thanks to God. "The creatures," said Father Forester, "give thanks to God in their own way for their food. When the bird drinks, he lifts his little head to heaven; when the squirrel eats, he raises the nut to heaven in his forepaws; when the hog roots, he pushes his snout into the earth and grunts—each in his own way." This pleasant conceit was dutifully taken *in toto* by all who heard, which would be about twenty per cent of those in attendance, excluding those who slept; those who were watching someone else; those who were disapproving someone's baby, someone's hat, someone's restlessness; those who were starry-eyed in dreams about someone dear but not at the moment near; the fidgety, the restless and eager to escape (my corner); and of those twenty per cent, ninety per cent were already familiar with the concept, two per cent will remember it later, and one half of one per cent will remember to watch the birds, the squirrels, and the pigs to see whether it is actually so; the rest will have forgotten it ere they reach the sidewalk after services—all of which points to an obvious moral which no one will say and no one will heed.

19 JULY: Verily, out of the mouths of babes! Told last night, after I had gone, to behave when company was in the house, Jack Bachhuber said, "Aw, Augie ain't company; he's just somebody that comes and sits around and thinks he knows everything."

20 JULY: Summer lies upon the village today at its height, in the falling of sunlight and shadow, a bird on the back-door stoop, the aspect of roadside and lanes, the deep rich green of foliage with already here and there among birch and elm the first yellowing leaves, the shimmering heat along the roads, the sounds that drift in from the countryside.

27 JULY: I went this morning to call on Millie Pohlmann in the charming atmosphere of age her house possesses, with its samplers, old furniture, lamps, pictures, bric-a-brac. She was making costumes ready for the centennial. "I want to have a fashion parade," she said, showing me a beautiful gray dolman made of heavy cloaking and ornamented with gray plush, still in prime condition though it is close to eighty years old. During all the while I sat there, I heard the sound of swallows in her chimney, the noise of young birds and the conversation of parents. "Yes, I've got hornets, too," she said, showing me her thin arm, stung and swollen. "Under the sidewalk in back of the house. I went out there and they bit me. But the swallows—they're noisy, but I don't mind them."

Downtown today I heard two quaint sayings. On Water Street, walking in rain without an umbrella, I met Anna Maegerlein, who said at once, "He wants to grow taller!"

because I carried no covering for my head. After the rain had ceased, one of the post office loafers opined, "The sun's too hot after rain; we'll get more."

3 AUGUST: This evening for the first time this year the pleasant, nostalgic whistle of threshing machines on the way from farm to farm around their rings drifted into the village on the west wind.

4 AUGUST: While in rehearsal this evening with a portion of the cast for the centennial pageant, I heard about old Immanuel Kirschner, who preceded his wife and family into the country by several years in the 1840's. He settled near Roxbury, and presently his wife packed up and came after him, without, however, any definite directions as to just where he might be found. She came through Milwaukee and headed for the Wisconsin river valley. Since she was an outstanding yodeler in her native country, she paused to yodel at different places along the road. Pausing at the tavern in Roxbury, she yodeled there. Kirschner, at work in a field some distance away, heard. "That's my wife!" he said and set out at once for the tavern, where they were once again united.

6 AUGUST: Apropos the centennial pageant of characters, Teddy Crusius this morning at his cottage showed me a portrait of his mother and her coffee tankard, made by her son, Dr. Louis, when he lay dying. *Die Schwaben-Tante,* he called it. This was in 1911. "They always said my mother would die on the street," said Teddy, chuckling, "and she did." He thereupon related the story of her death after a

Kaffeeklatsch at the Naffz home. She came out, prepared to leave in Mrs. Mueller's surrey and, while mounting into it, suffered a heart attack and died in Mrs. Mueller's arms. Someone in the party at the Crusius cottage mentioned again the collapse of the bridge under the threshing machine, and then Emmy Kuoni told how Richard had at one time also gone into the river off the Upper Sac Prairie bridge, when a span had fallen away behind him. Richard had crossed the bridge on a wagon, with two horses and a dog; he was dozing under an umbrella when the wagon slid back end first down the broken span into the river. Richard had presence of mind enough to cut the traces so that the horses might swim—one to an island, one to shore; the dog rode a board down river to mid-town, and Richard swam, shouting for help. But the bridge-tender, knowing all the time that something might go wrong with the rickety bridge, was so upset that he could do nothing but run up and down the shore. Richard, however, landed safely enough at mid-town, ran to a telephone, and called Emmy to say only, "If you hear anything, I'm safe!"

9 AUGUST: As predicted, the pestiferous minister made additional complaint about the centennial celebration today. This time it concerned the pageant, about which he had read in the local papers. "Are they going to have a priest baptize Black Hawk?" he asked, and then, without investigating, he proceeded forthwith to denounce the pageant, the people in it, the people who took any part—all in his regretful manner. "I don't want to cause dissension," he said, storming because he thought a priest might baptize the

pageant's Black Hawk. "Of course, it isn't the religious aspect, but the historical one," he maintained. "Black Hawk wasn't baptized by a priest." I reassured him; no priest would baptize Black Hawk; an Indian medicine man would do it. He mulled over this half a day, and then had the incredible insolence to protest because we were not, after all, having a *Christian* minister do the baptizing. Thereupon I fixed him with a baleful eye and informed him that I would like either to see him abolished by decree at once, or banished to that particular part of heaven occupied by Billy Sunday and Anthony Comstock. He was shocked into silence and departed, after which the dress rehearsal could go forward.

10 AUGUST: Julia Lampertius was found dead in bed this morning—Julia, from whom as a small boy I used always to get at Christmas time her cookie forms, so that mother could make cookies in the shape of chickens, cows, lions, dogs, rabbits, and others. Her dark eyes, and her bright, elfin smile and cheery greeting never failed, no matter how miserable she might have felt with the suffering she endured because of the goiter pressing inward and weakening her heart. Ironically, her last expressed wish had been that no one might die and spoil the centennial celebration. She had had a stroke in the night, and had died without suffering, unknowing. Her bedclothes had been thrown back, doubtless so that she might escape the heat, but her body betrayed no struggle. Lena Hofer had come that morning to help clean and, failing to gain entry, had summoned help. Uncle Joe, passing, heard her, and got a ladder, by the aid of which he reached the window of Julia's room and discovered her. Last night, said Renna, she had had a good time with the

old gang. She and Sal, Emmy, Renna, and a few others had gone downtown to watch people making floats. After eleven, on her way home, she was asked by Renna whether she wanted company, but Bill Kennedy, coming just then on his way home, joined her, and she replied, "No, I've got a boy friend now." That was the last of her, that and her laughter dying away up the street.

11 AUGUST: The first day of the centennial came at last: a clear day, not too warm, with a light wind from the south. Helen Merk, true to her word, had arranged for someone to imitate *"der dicke Wuerth,"* so that at six o'clock promptly a bugle and snare drum played a rousing tune from the St. Aloysius church steeple. Thus the day began. For me, however, the church steeple's hail had hardly died away before the telephone began to ring; and so it kept up—last moment details to be settled, while into the village came Winnebagos, colorful on foot and horse, ox-carts and oxen, Conestoga wagons, floats, and the like for the parade to the picnic grounds. To judge by appearances, Sac Prairie for once was given over to celebration—all store windows filled with antiques, and old Mrs. J. H. Diehl busily and happily spinning in the Leinenkugel-Lang window.

12 AUGUST: The second day of the centennial was no less lively than the first. At the picnic grounds I had the good fortune to meet old Mrs. Louisa Spiehr Weissenborn—a small, age-bent woman well in her eighties, filled with reminiscences and eager to impart them, rambling cheerfully from the old saw mills at one time along the Wisconsin to early teaching days. Rose Trautman, she said, was as dili-

gent a pupil as she had ever known. "At that time the Trautmans lived across the river. During one winter, ice packed up against the bridge and broke out a span, staying right there—a jagged wall of ice where the span had been. Rose was so determined to take her examinations, for which she had studied so long, that she laboriously climbed this mass of ice in order to reach Upper Sac Prairie, where the examinations were being held. And of course, she took the best marks."

13 AUGUST: After dinner at Bachhubers' this evening, I went over to the Park Hall to keep an eye on the old-time dance, for which came presently in many delightful old-fashioned costumes Ami Ferber, Mrs. Lucius Clement, Ed and Selma Schubring, Millie Pohlmann, Josie Merkel, Lyda Meyer, Alma Diehl, Moritz and Tillie Traub, and others, all ready for square dances, polkas, schottisches, and whatever else might be offered. I watched them with some enjoyment doing all the old dances until Mrs. Lucius Clement, seeing me, prevailed upon me to squire her for a square dance, and off we went, neither of us knowing how to do it, but soon almost hysterical with laughter and having a riotous time. Told later that she was seventy-three, I was thunderstruck; she had danced with the energy of thirty, and had manifested no more exhaustion than a woman of thirty might have shown.

Presently I went downstairs into the Hall's large dining room and there sat with Mrs. Weissenborn again, to hear her tell about old Mr. Werla, Julia Lampertius's grandfather, a man with a terrible temper, but so fond of music that he gave his horses musical directions, and the animals under-

stood. Thus, as Mrs. Weissenborn often heard, when as children she and Mrs. Lampertius rode in the wagon to the country with him, he would urge them on, "Adagio!": slow them up, "Andante!": hurry them, "Poco allegretto!" She went on to mention the genesis of the name Halunkaberg, applied to a hamlet east of Sac Prairie—because of the number of rowdies there in the old days, the place had become known as *Halunken-berg,* that is: rogues' town.

Intermission broke into her reminiscences, and the crowd from upstairs came down, and, spurred by Ed Schubring and Lucius Clement, directed by Elsa Kellersberger, sang old German songs: *Die Lorelei, Du, du liegst mir im Herzen, O Tannenbaum! O du lieber Augustin,* et cetera. However, despite all this, Mrs. Weissenborn did not cease talking, the difference being only that I could no longer hear her. Song reigned supreme.

17 AUGUST: In the annual trip around through the west country beyond Sac Prairie today, with mother and Ray, we stopped at Spring Green, where we found great-uncle Arnold taking his ease in the shade on the north side of the house, and great-aunt Annie just coming down the street. I asked him why he hadn't been up in Sac Prairie recently, and he replied with great gusto, "Couldn't come afoot and the aeroplanes wouldn't stop!" laughing heartily. Looking around, I saw that in great-aunt Annie's garden, as in so many of the villages, petunias and zinnias, the colorful flowers, predominated. "They're so faithful, the petunias are," she said. "Wet or dry, they're always abloom. And such pretty colors, too."

Later, having gone through Plain, paused at the White

Mound cemetery as always, we came to cousin Lizzie's, where at first there was no sign of activity. I bellowed once or twice, and finally heard a shrill "for God's sakes!" and there was cousin Lizzie flashing into the house in bare feet and with only a loose maroon-colored dress on. We forthwith went after her. She was in the midst of pickling pear crabs, her dinner dishes still on the table, and the air in the house fragrant with spices. "If that don't beat all!" exclaimed Lizzie, laughing. "I declare it never fails when I got the house all upset that somebody don't come!" She insisted upon our going into the dining room and sitting down. Mother inquired about her health, somewhat too solicitously, I thought, as if it were a delicate matter. "Oh, I been sick," said Lizzie. "The other night I thought I'd cash in sure." At this point came a faint knocking on an inner door; Lizzie did not at first hear, whereupon it occurred again, more loudly. She got up and opened the door quickly; there stood cousin Polly for a moment before she disappeared. "It's that Pauline!" said Lizzie of her sister. Polly ran out and sat down on the back-porch steps to put on her shoes, at which formality I teased her unmercifully. Then she came in to "set." Lizzie was talking of the day's activities. "I put down some blackberries; just before dinner I said to Pauline we might as well pick some berries, and we went out. A person gets so many thorns in his fingers though." She paused to needle one from her flesh. "But where there is berries, they're black with them—all the bushes," said Polly, presently adding, "Corn's down. Rain and wind yesterday and the ground too wet. But that hybrid corn across the road—that's not down." "Yes," said cousin Lizzie again, "I've been sick. A couple of days I couldn't do anything. And the other night . . ." "Ohhh!

don't tell 'em that!" shouted Polly. "Don't tell 'em that one. Ohh! Hohhh!" And she turned, laughing, to us, tipping her ragged straw hat back on her head, her eyes sparkling. Lizzie went on imperturbably. "I was working hard all day—put down some blackberry jam, and come midnight the kitchen floor was still dirty, but I was too tired to clean it. I went to bed, and about two o'clock I woke up—so sick. My heart needed exercise, I figured; so I got up to walk around. Then I got out into the kitchen and saw how dirty that floor was, and I figured I might as well clean it." "She wanted to get it clean before she died!" interrupted Polly with a whoop, as if this were indeed a great joke. "As if anybody cared how it looked after you were dead!" "I wasn't thinking of that," continued Lizzie. "Anyway, I begun to clean it; then I got so tired I had to go back to bed. But I sure thought I'd cash in." This subject done, the girls launched immediately into a recent wedding. "That was a sister of his wife's he married, and she scarce six months dead. My conscience! Well, if he treats her the way he treated his first wife, she ain't got much comin'," said Lizzie. "Hoh! he run after her other sister, that one's a widow, too; and she slammed the door in his face, she told him where to get off at. But this one, she took him right way. Why, they was wanting to get married when his wife wasn't two months dead, but the priest told him to wait, and her priest told her, too. But a lot of good that done. They was always together anyway," said Polly darkly. Lizzie took it up. "It beats all!" she said, "how some folks carry on!" "But don't you worry," cried Polly warningly. "You wait, you'll see—there was a funeral in that family today, out west they buried a cousin, and there'll be a cross in it a year from now!" (That is: someone in the

family will die, the funeral and wedding on the same day being an omen.)

We were no more than half a block from the house when mother, inevitably, mourned, "How bad Lizzie looks. She can't last much longer, with only one kidney and all!" Whereupon I could not restrain myself from bursting into laughter, since poor cousin Lizzie has been dying all these past years, and has not looked much different through all of them.

19 AUGUST: This evening on the bridge, Hugh used an expression becoming daily more common in the village. After we had passed a woman whose actions had drawn his attention, he asked, "Who's that woman? I don't think she's got all her marbles."

22 AUGUST: This morning in the post office Carl Lampertius talked about grandfather Derleth's great strength. "Your uncle Charlie was strong, too. One time he had to shoe a pair of mules when your granddad was sick, and he couldn't quite do it alone. So I skipped school to help him. Well, we got started all right, but about half way, one of the mules started to buck; I let go, and the mule swung Charlie right off the floor and clean through a window of the shop. We had to fix up an excuse next day, and just when I handed it in, Mr. Lueders—Herman, that was, he was principal then—came in; he took my excuse, and, the friend of the family he was, he took it home. I got my hide tanned!"

I learned this afternoon that Ginny Blye, certain that she did not do enough trading anywhere, could not feel justified about availing herself of a calendar, with the result that she

began to use an October 1920 sheet for the present month. This had the unfortunate result of adding to the confusion often brought about by her widely known forgetfulness, so that one day last week she sent out missionary society meeting announcements in accordance with her October calendar. She had to telephone a cancellation to each member, and as a result was finally presented with a calendar by the wife of one of the local merchants.

24 AUGUST: I stopped at Lampertius's tonight, so that Carl could give me Julia's old cookie-forms. Looking once more at the old, long-familiar cutters, I saw myself again trudging down from home through the snow of mid-December to get them. "They're old," said Carl. "They used to belong to Mrs. Schramm; she gave them to old Mrs. Crusius, and then my mother got them. I want somebody who'll appreciate them to have them."

25 AUGUST: Spending part of this muggy afternoon with grandfather Derleth, I could not help teasing great-aunt Margaret about the steadfastness of her religious beliefs, she quite certain of her rightness. "Yes, you're a Derleth," I said to her. "There's nothing wrong with that," she protested indignantly. "When you've got a jaw like that, there is." Grandfather laughed and said, "We're three of a kind!" And she cracked, "Stubborn as mules!"

31 AUGUST: Coming home at about five o'clock, I found the widow Schaefer with her children, Lynette and Maurice, on the back porch, all three looking concerned, and mother with some dubious concern on her own features. Urged by mother, Mrs. Schaefer said that their old clock, which had

not run for twelve years, had suddenly that afternoon struck four precisely at four o'clock: a remarkable coincidence, but hardly ominous. "Something's going to happen, sure!" said Mrs. Schaefer. "I know it; you can't tell me." Nor could she be told, though the children were disinclined to believe in superstition. The effect of her fear was comical, since it was evident that she will be watching for dire events to occur and will attribute every little misfortune to the coincidental striking of the old clock.

1 SEPTEMBER: Walking slowly up the Mazomanie road tonight with Hugh, I saw farmer Lenson and his wife feeding a calf by lanternlight: a pleasant, homely little scene, bound around by darkness: and stood silently to watch, neither of us saying any word, and the dog familiar enough with us not to bark, sitting in the shadows between his master and us, and looking from one to the other. Before the night was out, I commemorated the incident in *By Lanternlight.*

At Lenson's farm the yellow glow
came warmly from the quiet dark and lay
against the night, pale in the leaves, low
on the asphalt road, pale as the rim of day
along the western sky. Close by the old rail fence
the lantern stood;
under dark, the brooding elm, a tree
far older than the dwelling there, the wood
shone worn, shone brown. Lensons, he and she,
stood in the light, their shadows great behind:
he on the fence's one side, she on the other where
she was most of help to him, who worked half blind

by lanternlight. There
he stood with pails in hand, feeding young
calves. Their snuffling and his low, cajoling words—
these sounds alone against the crying of a
whippoorwill wrung
from the head of hill beyond, the wooded slope
where other birds
long since were still.
Only a brief while so,
held in that yellow shell of light:
then he came over the fence; they turned to go,
took up the lantern and were shrouded, lost in night.

20 SEPTEMBER: At the harness shop today, I saw Andy. He said he had a cold again. "Another one, gosh all fishhooks!" Grinning, he added, "You can have it; you got more time to get rid of it."

21 SEPTEMBER: While hiking this afternoon, I saw for the first time a pair of egrets, locally called white herons, which have been reported from time to time. They were feeding in the Lower Meadow, and seemed larger than their blue cousins, doubtless because of the sharpness of sunlight on their white plumage. I observed them for some time, and found that they were not easily frightened, only raising their heads from time to time to survey me, and once to watch the progress of the handcar up the railroad tracks. Their call, as closely as I could determine, was precisely the same kind of harsh *krark* as that of the great blue heron.

22 SEPTEMBER: Startled this noon by a great hullabaloo being made outside the house—shouting, whistling, and the like: I looked out and discovered that a cow was loose in the village, having apparently escaped from a truck while being loaded for shipment at the stock yards a block down the street. The creature was at the moment crossing the lawn toward the field and park east of the house, undoubtedly a little put out at all the to-do: boys chasing her at a safe distance, men waving arms on the street, two men in a truck trying to judge which way she might go, loath to start until they knew, and letting out bellows from time to time apparently in a forlorn hope to influence her course. The cow went past the Park Hall, broke through Mrs. Carliner's fence, and made good progress toward the south end of Sac Prairie before she was caught.

24 SEPTEMBER: In the harness shop this afternoon I observed Hugh patient before the verbal onslaught of a dunderheaded farmer who was holding forth on the subject of "the God-damned vets" and their "God-damned high" fees for vaccination. "God damn it, there hain't no such thing as sleeping sickness to a horse; it's jest that they eat too much grasshoppers. I had one and the doc he says it had the sleeping sickness and I jest give it a dose of salts and out come a whole roll of grasshoppers. When do they get this damn' sleeping sickness? At night, when the grasshoppers can't get away; that's when!" Since there was obviously no cure for such ignorance, Hugh let him rave on, though clearly he was being tried.

27 SEPTEMBER: A smoky, hazy day over the hills: from the dip in the Big Hill, where I sat all afternoon, it was impossible to see even the Ferry Bluff, and the sun, sinking westward, was dimmed too, so that its color became orange red some time before it reached the horizon. Bluebirds sang in the claret oak trees, and a brown thrasher mocked in the valley. In midafternoon I walked back among the old stumps, and, happening to tip one a little, frightened out three white-footed deer mice. I stood there, quite remorseful, and gently lowered the stump again, covering their home, but they were apparently not terrified; they stood before me on their hind legs, watching me inquisitively if alertly before they turned and vanished beneath the stump once more. Returning to the hill's dip, I wrote *Three Deer Mice.*

Pausing on the hilltop where the wind delayed
among the asters, and made a wave
there in the grass, I leaned and touched a stump,
an old gray husk; it gave
and tipped a little; three white-footed mice came
gravely out.
They were no less surprised than I, to look about
and see me there; but showed it less. I was still,
and they were still.
Before the stump, gray-white against the wood
that held them snug through winter's cold, they
stood up unafraid;
and I, less stoutly made,
began to tremble lest I move and frighten them
away. A blue-jay scolded
angrily while two of them stood on their hind legs,
front paws folded
like old ladies' hands, sedate and dignified;
the third came forward, touched my shoe, shied,
and went back again. A chewink sang, a peewee
tipped upon a limb; the minute held for an eternity:
three unafraid white-footed mice, the ghost of what
had been a tree,
and I atremble there. Then suddenly
were gone the three, into the loam,
under the hilltop stump that was their home.

29 SEPTEMBER: The high-school auditorium was the scene tonight of the showing of moving pictures taken of the centennial and of the village at that time, chiefly to advertise various home town businesses, all prosaically enough.

Pat Mettel served as the interlocuter, while Irma Sherwood played the piano. This combination, as it were, saved the picture, for, while Pat was expatiating upon the glory of Wisconsin and Sac Prairie, Irma played *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny;* while Dresen & Littel loaded and took away an old chair, *How Can I Leave Thee?;* and, while Bill Meicher loaded lumber, the *Anvil Chorus.* This unintentional arrangement was, apart from a single appearance of Minnie Meyer looking inquisitively into the camera, the sole humor of the showing.

1 OCTOBER: Dandelions blossomed all over the village lawns this morning, bright and gay; but for the dry leaves scattered by the wind, lawns had the aspect of May, and the wind from the south was mellow as in spring.

4 OCTOBER: The Reverend Johnson of Upper Sac Prairie has long been in the habit of paying bumbling visits to his parishioners, and it is only now becoming known that he takes the opportunities afforded by these visits to tell interminably about his trips and his relatives. He called on Mrs. Cooper today, and a friend later telephoned Mrs. Cooper to ask about her health. "Oh, I'm all in," replied Mrs. Cooper. "I've just been to North Dakota with Reverend Johnson and met all the relatives."

5 OCTOBER: Young Jack (Froly) Stanton informed me this afternoon that he would be up tonight to interview me for the school paper, *Fresh Talk,* and I had "better be home." He said he would come at seven, but showed up at twenty minutes to, saying that he wanted to go to the show and

would have to shorten the interview. He sat next to my desk, his hot, sultry eyes brooding on my typewriter. What did I write? he wanted to know. And why? He leafed casually through an advance copy of *Restless Is the River*, and put it down for a brief look around my quarters. Quite suddenly he attacked his notebook with great haste and violence, and as abruptly was done. He had completed his interview and opined that he could still make the first show, if he went "like hell."

6 OCTOBER: Pausing at the high school today, I saw a copy of *Fresh Talk* and Froly's "article," the result of his interview. It was commendably short, and he managed to get in enough detail to indicate that he had done some research after the show. But its heart lay in one brief, pointed paragraph. "August Derleth is one of the best authors I know around here. He takes walks over the railroad bridge every night. He plans on writing fifty books like the eight mentioned. This he wants to do before he dies. He is a tall and strong man. He owns five typewriters and is going to build a place for his studying."

I was much amused and said so. This presently reached Froly's ears, whereupon he marched up to me downtown, planted himself before me, fixed his sultry brown eyes on me, and said, "After thinkin' it over, you ain't so big." I took him in and bought him a sundae, which mollified him, though he said he saw no reason to change his mind.

7 OCTOBER: In the harness shop this afternoon, Nikki Truckenbrodt began to talk about the hole-in-the-roof tactics of the local fire chief, referring idly to the Ripley fire, where

the chief had broken in a large front window, entered and brought forth a fern, following it with a pedestal upon which he gravely placed the fern, when all the time the fire was in the kitchen at the rear and soon under control. I had not, however, heard before of the Benker-Graf fire, at which Nikki arrived to find the actual fire under the first floor near the forge, and the firemen swarming on to the roof, preparing to chop a hole in it, with one of them standing out in front, blowing on a small whistle. This ludicrous scene was shortly capped by a prosaic climax: the fire went out virtually by itself.

11 OCTOBER: Mrs. Conger called on Mrs. Cooper today in Madison, where Mrs. Cooper is hospitalized. The Reverend Johnson had just been there. "How are you, Mrs. Cooper?" asked Mrs. Conger. Mrs. Cooper shook her head. "I've just spent the afternoon with one of Reverend Johnson's cousins in Illinois," she said tiredly.

13 OCTOBER: At the supper table tonight, after I had excused my lateness by saying that I had been down over the railroad bridge, mother recalled old Mr. Spangenberg, who was for a long time the bridge-tender, especially during the days prior to my parents' wedding. "How often we used to see him going across the bridge at night with his lantern. No matter how late the train went down, he went over, looking for fire from the engine." She brought back the old man with his glowing lantern along the trestles in search of fires accidentally set by the sparks driving upward from the

engine's stack. "And he used to chase people off—but when the young couples went over after the train was gone, he looked the other way and pretended he didn't see them!" She laughed, and I knew that she and dad had been one of the young couples.

20 OCTOBER: In the post office this morning Gus Pillep complained about the mosquitoes, saying, "You kill one, and a dozen come to the funeral right away!"

21 OCTOBER: Taking occasion this morning to glance over recent issues of the local weeklies, I found that another of those horribly Christian ladies of Sac Prairie had gone to her reward, and the obituary read as might be expected: "Mrs. —— was blessed with Christian parents and a Christian home. Her father and mother were active members of the Black Hawk Evangelical Church. In the home there was an abundance of Christian literature. She imbibed the very spirit of this Christian home." This was doubtless a comfort to her in this pagan era, and the obituary leaves one in no doubt that Mrs. —— went to heaven as a Shining Example.

22 OCTOBER: At the end of his first day of business, Howard Hicks, proud in his new store, said tonight that he expected a visit *circa* one o'clock from one of his competitors. "I suppose he'll be down at one o'clock with a flashlight," he said. "How so?" asked Ray. "Well, when Royal Blue opened up, he went over, after they closed the first night, with a flashlight to look over their prices!"

26 OCTOBER: Grandfather Derleth told this morning how he had walked and walked each harvest time in his very early teens from farm to farm working in harvest at a dollar a day and usually paying three dollars weekly for board and room. Of this he saved half and gave half to his mother. It was out of such savings that he bought his first suit. "I bought my first one with my own money; that was when I was seventeen or so. I got it from Lachmund & Weidt that time, but old Calscheidt made it. I got the best material, and he said to me, 'How does it come you're getting yourself such a good suit?' I said I figured it was a cheap suit. His eyes opened at that, but in a little while he said, 'If you figure it to wear ten years, it's a cheap suit.' I said, 'Mr. Calscheidt, that's just what I figure it'll do.' It wore just twelve years, what with a little altering from time to time. I was still wearing it when I got married."

27 OCTOBER: Tonight bonfires burned all over along the village streets, their orange and red glowing between the streetlights, bright beneath the evening's lingering afterglow, the smoke of burning leaves ineffably sweet on the air, the year's tangible dying. Children played still, crying shrilly in the quiet twilight, reluctant to go in as soon they must, eager to make the best of their last moments while the flames made little pools of uncertain, flickering light which danced magically upon their eager faces and lit up their eyes. Pausing just beyond a little group of them, I put down *Leaf Burning.*

Now on the rim of day
the fires are set, the bright, bright

flames in gutters, lanes, on corners where
the streetlights flower
lemon yellow in this evening hour:
set to bind the day to night
and sweeten autumn air: elm, maple, oak—
and ash to lend its pungence to the smoke.

Children shout and circle about
until the fires, one and one, go out.
Smoke in the naked limbs, below
the eaves: smoke in a haze where streetlights glow:
grows orange among the trees: comes dusk, and soon
the night. Alone at edge of dark
the screech owl mourns in the shadowed park.

29 OCTOBER: The house was mad with bustle this morning, since Hildred was getting married today, and myself in a black mood, since I had unwittingly consented to be best man, and found myself now needing to wear a shirt and tie for the first time in countless years. The ordeal, however, was soon over, not without much pulling and tugging at my collar and muttering to Father Forester to hasten the ceremony, which was no sooner over than I got home, took off the new shirt, and presented it to father.

31 OCTOBER: All Hallows, and tonight I encountered small groups of boys stirring aimlessly in various places throughout the village. They mourned that all the old-fashioned toilets had already been tipped over, and there were, in any case, too few left to tip; there was no fun to soaping windows because nobody minded, "not even the

cop"; and there were no gates to remove, no wagons to pull away and put atop the railroad station's roof or boxcars. So they milled around, tramping up one street and down another. I met them several times and walked with them a little. They were disconsolate.

1 NOVEMBER: Just before midnight, I walked slowly home from downtown, coming up Phillips Boulevard and turning to walk past grandfather's house and toward the park. The aura of the village was tangible—the town still save for the hum of cars on Water Street and highways leading north and west across the prairie, east across the river; something of the village lay in the pale ghost of the water tower rising from among the trees of the little park, in the old-fashioned, once elegant globular stair-post light burning in the Buerki house, waiting for Helen to come home, in voices from the darkness of houses, where people made ready for bed in the dark, the tinkling of a cowbell from the hills, cricket voices thin but persistent, the subdued conversation of late visitors drawing away from a lighted porch. High overhead the stars shone brightly, Vega low in the northwest, Orion high in the east. The park, the lonely Park Hall, with the streetlight slanting, fingering toward it, and the scuttering of leaves underfoot: all these aspects of the autumn night together were Sac Prairie.

7 NOVEMBER: In the midst of the season's first blizzard, Barney Merkel came stalwartly to town for his evening paper, undeterred by storm and snow, and with head unbowed.

9 NOVEMBER: Andy was in the harness shop this morning, and he sat through into the afternoon. He was holding forth on the "goggone elections," confident that many people would rue their Republican votes. Somehow he began to talk about inventions. "I c'n remember when they invented that seamer. Before that, down there in the canning factory, you had to put 'em on by hand, the covers, I mean, and your cousin Sarah, John Derleth's daughter that was, your pa's cousin that would be, she could put 'em on fast as could be, flip, flip, flip (with gestures), and on they went, but that goggone machine does it all faster yet and more sure to boot! Heck, y'know, it's them machines that put the men out a work, that's what."

13 NOVEMBER: In the bottoms this afternoon, with a cold wind roaring through the trees, the brook was so black with minnows that every concerted movement resulted in many of them being forced in a wave from the water, making a silver movement along the brook's banks. Over the Lower Meadow's north line the maples were thick with maroon buds, and the birch's long fingerlike buds waved gracefully in the wind, sheathing the coming spring. All along the meadow seeds were beautiful: bladder nut, wahoo, climbing false buckwheat, carrion berries, black alders, and the fragile whiskery woodbine seeds. The mustard of pussywillows and the red of osiers made the distances colorful; here and there the steel blue of silky cornel berries caught the sun. Walking up along the east shore toward the highway bridge, we came upon the flat scowlike boat belonging to Jack Meise, deposited against a section of the fence there,

half a mile below the bridge, discovered by Jack, and wired to a tree. Near by was a toy boat, evidently belonging to Dexter; this must have gone off with the larger boat, and,

discovered at the same time, was now gravely moored to a tree by an absurd length of rope, larger than the boat itself.

14 NOVEMBER: Mr. Elky came into the post office this morning and looked long and hard at the Parcel Post Destinations list, for the past years up on the wall there, and

presently said, "That's a wonderful thing, when you think of these things, all these things going every place in the world and how little of it ever gets lost, it's a wonderful thing. Now, if only humans were that way!"
This afternoon in the harness shop Ed Muckler, wanting some repairs on a bridle, asked Hugh what he had been doing outside. "Buckin' wood?" Hugh explained that he was waiting for Will Koerth to get around to sawing it, but in the meantime had run short of wood to use in the shop and had to cut some. "In my day we used to buck wood after school," said Ed. "Some of the boys. That was thirty-eight years ago—I was sixteen then. We did it for fifty cents a cord. But in those days I could buy a pair of overalls like I got on now for that fifty cents."

16 NOVEMBER: Mrs. Kenler, I have discovered, is very fond of singing hymns, when she is not at the telephone about her children or grandchildren or the priest's activities or the doings of the Christian Mothers. Unfortunately, she seems to remember no words but *Jesus,* and, to make up for her lack, she puts that into her flat-toned humming whenever she sees fit, thus:

dum de dum de dum de JESUS
dum de JESUS dum dum
dum de dum dum JESUS de dum . . .

17 NOVEMBER: In the post office this morning Carl Lampertius said that old Mr. Lueders had put together a perpetual calendar. "He never got a calendar from the stores; he didn't need it; he had that perpetual calendar he made, and it was good enough."

20 NOVEMBER: Hugh made cross-sections of willow twigs, prickly ash limbs, osiers, and young maples in the bottoms this afternoon, holding the thin sections up to the sunlight so that the beautiful, delicately colored patterns were clearly visible and held in the sun's warm glow. He whittled and cut away, with his back against a haystack. A gray marsh harrier soared and dipped over the meadow, wheeling curiously above us before riding swiftly away on the high wind.

22 NOVEMBER: An elderly gentleman from Madison came into the harness shop this morning and said he wanted Boar's Oil. "There's nothin' like it," he said. "The lumberjacks up north use it; I can just put it on my shoes, tan or black—it won't change the color, and it sure keeps out water. I can walk in slush any time." "The lumberjacks ought to know," said Hugh, "but I haven't got it. Never heard of it." "Well, I just took a chance," said the old man cheerfully and went out. "They want everything I haven't got," observed Hugh, shrugging. "There's nothing better in oils than neat's-foot!"

Arnold Hagen told me today at Kroger's Store that certain children have a habit of picking apples out of display bushels in front of the store. He had said nothing about it, but somehow their mother learned of it, and this morning he was confronted by one of the children, who gave him thirty-five cents and a worn note—"Why don't you either keep your apples inside or have them watched? Since the

girl lost the money the first time, this is the second time I paid for your apples." He sent the note back with, "Why don't you either keep your kids home or have them watched?"

26 NOVEMBER: Old Puli held forth on the weather again this morning in the post office. The snow, he said, was here to stay. "It's just what it looks like—winter," said he sagely. "We've had a nice summer and a good fall; now we'll get a hard winter."

In at Liney's barbershop this morning, Circ was asked, "How goes it?" He pondered the question and presently answered thoughtfully, "Oh, so *Zimmlich!*"

I stopped in to see Emmy this afternoon. She was thinking of old Mrs. Snow. "She's over ninety, I'm sure of it," she said. "And there she goes, pulling her wagon around, to do the shopping." She gazed thoughtfully after the rugged, bent old woman, so determined to live her own life in her own way. "She came to see me once. I'll never forget it. She told me about how she came over to this country when she was five years old. She was pretty, she said. She came over in steerage with her sister and her parents, and they were poor, so poor! She took the eye of a rich old man from New York—he'd just lost his own daughter—and one day he went to her father and offered to buy her. 'I can't sell her,' he had said. And then all her life was so hard. She told me that, and then she looked out of the window, and she sighed. 'Oh, what I've gone through!' she said. 'Oh, if only—if *only* father had sold me!' "

28 NOVEMBER: Mellow with reminiscences today, Eli sat in the harness shop this afternoon and told about the inexpensive entertainment of the old days gone. "They had bees of all kinds," he said. "For every excuse, they got together a bee for this and that, and they all had a good time; didn't cost much, either. When I was a kid, back in the 60's and early 70's, father and mother always had a popcorn-popping bee—anyway once a year and sometimes oftener in the winter all the kids in the neighborhood came over to our house, and we popped corn in a long-handled spider with a wire-net cover, a screen cover, and we all sat around and ate it, with just salt in those days: sugar was expensive; but once in a while mother made us sorghum syrup to put over it. Then later on we had saw bees—whenever father's wood was ready to saw up, we got all the young men together and had them up to saw wood. We strung lanterns in trees, and we all set to work. We always got finished early; then we had a lunch, and after that we played cards until ten-thirty, eleven o'clock, never later. That time, too, we had a dancing club—some of us got together and paid Mrs. Frenzel a dollar, collected dimes for an accordion-player, and danced in the Astor House until midnight. Of course, in a public dance those days we danced till daylight; many a time I came home from a dance, changed clothes, ate breakfast, and went out to work. Those days I worked for fifteen dollars a month and boarded myself, too. And they complain about wages today!"

29 NOVEMBER: The paper today carried a memory of days gone by in this: "The man who blew out the gas at the hotel Thursday night and was found in his room next morning completely unconscious and almost dead, recovered consciousness yesterday about eleven o'clock. He said he blew out the gas not knowing but that was the regular thing to do."

30 NOVEMBER: Etta Gasser recently announced her intention of giving her husband a radio in the car for Christmas. "Glarner always wanted one," she says. But Etta drives far more than Glarner, and Glarner occupies his car largely from house to store, from store to house.

This morning in the post office, old Puli and old man Hottson, both living either in the village or from one son to the next, sat excoriating the younger farming generation—"A worthless lot. They don't know how to work; they're too lazy. No wonder the farms ain't any good any more. Ain't one out of ten farmers knows how to farm; these young ones ain't any good." Standing next to me was the wife of one of "these young ones." I leaned toward her and whispered, "Doesn't it amuse you to hear a pair of failures tell the world what's wrong with farmers?" She smiled and nodded. "If they were good farmers, they'd be on the farms yet, without they had enough money to retire on. And even so—a real farmer, he puts down roots."

While Hugh and I were discussing the stars in the harness

shop this afternoon, Mr. Elky came in and peered through the telescope, which we had set up near the door. He saw nothing, however, and said as much. Hugh said the instrument was designed for star-gazing. "Stars?" repeated Elky, raising his bushy eyebrows. "What is these things? As I see it, a star is where a ray of light crosses another ray of light. Then you have a star." "Oh, no, no!" protested Hugh, and with some difficulty persuaded Elky to believe what little we could tell him about stars. Absently mentioning a nebula, Hugh was beset by questions about it. "What's that?" demanded Elky. "What is these things? I don't know nothing about these things." Hugh patiently explained what a nebula was; he listened until I ventured the postulate that some nebulae might be equivalent to universes like our own, but great distances away, so that their appearance was only cloudlike. That was too much for him; he would not believe it, plainly thinking it part and parcel of my imaginative life. "I haven't had time for such things," he said, shaking his cane. "I know that right is light, and light comes from the sun, and the sun is God. And I," he added, "will never die." From the south wall bench, Hugh made frantic motions to indicate that Elky was off again. So he was. Nothing could now stop him; his heavy face was transformed, he lifted his still-clear blue eyes heavenward, his bushy black eyebrows projected fully an inch above his eyes, he gesticulated with his cane. "I've been thinking about God and these things a long time—twenty, thirty years—and I base all upon my knowledge. What is to me as it is to you is knowledge." And so it went for an hour. After it was over, Elky went out apparently very happy at this exercise.

1 DECEMBER: In the barbershop today I heard that on the occasion of the approach of a comet some years ago, a Roxbury farmer declared his belief in the coming end of the world, and finally confidently predicted its occurrence on a certain night. On that night he went out to a haystack and mounted it to watch the end of the world. After he had fallen asleep, several of his neighbors set fire to the stack, whereupon he woke up and shouted, "Just as I said!" before he discovered himself the object of his neighbors' laughter.

Pausing briefly in the high school this morning, I heard

Milan Miller tell Karl he had listened to Munro Leaf, "the author of that book about Ferdinand, the bull," on the radio. "Did he throw the bull?" I asked. "Oh, no," answered Milan gravely, "he didn't have him there."

On the way home from the harness shop this evening, I encountered Circ coming from the west, walking homeward in the dusk. I did not see him until I heard his voice, saying urgently, "Get it, Boy! Go on—go ahead and get it, Boy!" and turned to see his dark figure walking alone in the dusk, his voice continuing as if in conversation with a child or dog.

2 DECEMBER: Bert Sauthoff said today at Moseley's Bookstore that the autographing business was getting out of hand. "A lady came in here the other day and asked for an autographed copy of the Bible. Can you beat it?"

3 DECEMBER: Mr. Elky came into the harness shop this morning, just after I had penciled a note on some of his papers left there for me to see, a note to the effect that most of his arguments would be tenable if he but substituted *believe* for *know*. I tried vainly to explain this to him, but he would not consider belief at all. "Knowledge is all," he said repeatedly. Quite suddenly he said, "You take electrons—they're so small you can't see them; a thousand of them could dance on the point of a pin. But a thought is so small it could think itself into an electron." Hugh tried to explain that an electron was material, a thought not, but Elky only looked annoyed to have been interrupted, and

went into the matter of knowledge with his customary detail. "If these is abstract things," he demanded at last, "what are they abstracted from?" Hugh gave up.

4 DECEMBER: Cousin Lizzie died today, incredibly, after so long a time of being expected by all the relatives to die. I took the call on the telephone and repeated it to mother. "Like fun!" exclaimed dad. Mother, however, said, "Didn't I always say so? I thought she'd go soon!" as if it had been only yesterday that first she had said so, rather than ten years ago!

5 DECEMBER: Elky stood in the harness shop this afternoon when I entered by the back door. He was bent over a volume of an encyclopedia, cane on arm, hat pushed back, puzzled eyes intent upon the printed page, while Hugh was engaged near the front door with a customer. Elky explained that he had been having a difference with Hugh, Hugh having maintained that gold was an element, Elky having taken the opposite stand. Lo! here now the book proved Elky wrong, and he was puzzled, he could not understand it; but the book said as much; so after due pondering he had come to feel that the book must in some instances be ignored. So much for gold and elements. Hugh finished with his customer and came back to the workbench, where Elky had closed the book and was standing with eyes fixed upon some remote recess of the ceiling in the darkness high along the south wall of the old shop. In a moment he began anew, telling again about the disorder in his mind in that "time before I had the visions." My head was so full of things

to say—and there was nobody to say them to, and I couldn't say them. When I closed my eyes, they all came to me, but the minute I opened them with my mouth full of words to say, everything was gone, there was nothing I could say, there was nobody to listen. Then I had the visions. That night everything was bright as day, and I talked with God. That's how I got my knowledge. I never had any education, I never had the chance. I didn't get to go farther than fourth grade, and I ain't got no use for an education." He took issue with our definition of belief so vehemently that I said, "Well, it comes to this—either you're wrong, or the rest of the world's wrong." He sighed, smiled, said, "Well, the world's in pretty bad shape these days!"

6 DECEMBER: Snow this morning inspired Hugh to put out the calendars: the harness shop's official signaling of the year's end. This year, as usual, there were two different pictures to choose from—one *In the Redwood Country*, a scene full of dark greens and a hint of red; the other entitled *Fishing for Bear*, by the inimitable J. Hy. Hintermeister—"after the master," as Hugh put it. All over the village, calendars have been out for close upon a fortnight, and the calendar collectors have only to come to the shop now to complete their harvest.

Effie said this evening that Harold's uncle was in the habit of carrying on conversations with their cocker spaniel, whom the old man had named *Moses*. He talked to the dog quite as if he were human and for some unknown reason has always preferred the kitchen in which to converse. On occa-

sion, he has spoken to the dog outside, but there invariably addressed him as *Murphy.*

8 DECEMBER: Late this afternoon, after the streetlights were on and the green-shaded lamp cast a warm yellow glow over the north wall workbench in the harness shop, Hugh and I held a formal meeting of the officers of the nebulous Town Characters Club and, in consideration of his general habit of appearing constantly on streets and in stores asking curious questions about matters which do not concern him; of his habit, recently developed, of walking through the harness shop as if it were a thoroughfare; of his appearance—the bent, lowered head, the inquiring, seemingly myopic eyes, the pipe laxly held in his mouth, the slightly red nose, the hat back on his head, the hands always held in the breast pockets of his jacket; of his custom of appearing as if by magic at the scene of any accident or unusual occurrence on Water Street, we unanimously nominated and elected to membership in the Club the local vet, with the honorable title of Old Nuisance.

9 DECEMBER: Stella Hiddessen has evolved a new feminine word for *walk.* "I'll *hipper* down," she says. The obvious derivation is from hips, but, since Stella is not herself blessed with overlarge hips, it must stem from observation, despite application to herself in speech.

10 DECEMBER: This evening in the library, Millie Pohlmann told how she used to go with Zeppelina's sister to Zeppelina's store, now the harness shop, and sit nightly in

the soft glow of the gas lamps, sparingly lit, as are the electric lights in the shop today, listening to Zeppelina tell and complain about business until came that time in the evening when she would announce, *"Heut' abend musz Ich dir treaten!"* Then the store would come to sudden, expectant life. Zeppelina's sister would nudge Millie and whisper, "Watch out for old stuff!" The old man, her husband, who had been dozing in a willow rocker with a sheepskin against his back, awoke and grew alert; he opened one eye and watched Zeppelina until she was just about to take out the cheapest candy in the case. Then he would suddenly thump his cane against the floor and shout, "Not the cheapest!" She would withdraw her hand as if stung, give him a reproachful glare, and reach for that which was only a little less expensive; this was repeated until at last the old man heaved himself up and went to the candy case, calling the girls, *"Komm, Mädchen*—pick out what you like best!" "We went to the store," said Millie, "about the time the train came in, around eight o'clock. That was the time people went downtown for the evening paper from Madison.

14 DECEMBER: At dinner this noon mother mentioned its being an "ember" day, and repeated that one of the ladies had told her this morning we would very likely have a clear, cold winter, for, "The way it is on the ember days, that's the way it's going to be all winter!"

19 DECEMBER: Hugh and I held another meeting of the officers of the Town Characters Club this afternoon; these meetings are literally being forced upon us. In the course of

the meeting we officially elected to membership John Parcy, the constant rationalizer, the eternal grouch about conditions here and how heavenly it was in his previous place. It was Erna Johnson who once pointedly asked: "Why don't you go back there?"

20 DECEMBER: At Moseley's Bookstore today, Ruth Wood came up to me and asked, "If you were in prison, what book would you like sent to you?" I asked who was in prison, and she gave me the name of a notorious swindler of small-time investors. "Why not *The Start of the Road?*" I asked, "or *Wolf Among Wolves?*" Ruth suggested something even better: *All This and Heaven Too—Gone With the Wind.*

23 DECEMBER: While Andy, Hugh, and I sat talking in the harness shop this afternoon, a woman transient stopped in, leading on a leash a large, evidently vicious English bulldog which she assured all of us was "mean." "Say, listen, he's killed five dogs already. And one cow—broke all four of her legs." She said she and her husband were staying at one of the local oil stations, and had difficulty managing the dog, of which she was inordinately proud. She said she had this dog, a mastiff, a canary, and an Angora, which was also vicious. So was the mastiff. None of us thought to ask about the canary, but doubtless it has taken its toll of eagles and the like in its time. I remarked that no doubt she had no children. "No," said she, "my dogs don't like children." The lack was not apparently biological, simply a matter of what her other dependents liked. She was in search of a

spiked collar for the dog, to give him even greater odds over smaller dogs, and demonstrated in a revealing way how she made him vicious. This interlude evidently inspired Andy, for, after she had gone, he praised the swiftness of his Spitz. "She's quick as a cat," he said. "A mouse never had a chance with her. One time Bill Schorer he had a rat in a cage, and he was afraid the dog wouldn't get her, so he and Hank and Eddie—we was all that time working in the factory—stood around with brooms and he opened the trap and, goggone it! that dog took one jump and had the rat before it got out of the box!"

24 DECEMBER: The Christmas Eve program at the Reformed Church tonight was a delight, as usual. The air in church was fragrant with cedar, emanating from a large Christmas tree near the choir loft, the tree all blue with pale lights. Hugh and I had scarcely seated ourselves before Oscar Wilhelm came in, looking dourly at us. He paused to say that Tom Bardshaw had asked the Village Board today to enact an ordinance against pigeons, presumably against anyone's keeping them. "Might as well pass a law against the wind," said Oscar. A disturbance below took our attention from Oscar. It was the entrance of Corny Bellairs, with his family of old and young—his mother, his aunt, his wife, his brood—those who were not on the program; his vapid face was beaming, and he overflowed with a sense of his importance. His wife went quietly into her pew and sat down; his mother followed; he went fussily in after her and was flanked by his aunt, but all the time he kept raising his head, craning his neck, frowning, and otherwise grimac-

ing, as if he meant to keep an eye on those of his children who were to mount the stage below the choir loft. In this constant movement and concern, he was joined by Zappy's sister, who, in Zappy's absence, did her best to maintain the tradition, running to and fro down the aisles, bending over to talk to her offspring in a severe manner but all the time commanding the attention of the audience, as if to say: "See what a good parent am I!" sometimes spoiling the general effect by turning and beaming upon the audience from time to time, much as if to acknowledge applause. Mr. Elpy came in, depositing his wife at the end of a bench in such a fashion that she could sit dowagerlike and look over all those who came in, her entire bearing seeming to say that she was a charter member of the organization, a representative of an old family, *et al.* Elpy himself looked grave and unctuous, taking his seat to the rear, well away from his wife.

The program began presently. Helen Buerki played the organ, which in former years her mother played, and followed *Silent Night, Joy to the World, O Little Town of Bethlehem,* and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* with a repetition of *Silent Night,* no less than three verses of which the audience was compelled to sing. Not only this, but Bobby Koenig then played a piano solo, in the course of which he also did *Silent Night.* The piece was worn threadbare by being played twice more during the program. The prayer was too long and made the audience restive. The children, of course, were excellent, intentionally or not.

29 DECEMBER: This morning I was much edified by a visit to the harness shop, where I found Hugh encouraging young Art Endres, *circa* seven, whose one ambition in life, to hear him talk, appears to be to kill someone. "I'm gonna be a gangster," he said. "My brother, he ain't got no ambition; he wants to be a fireman or a cowboy."

30 DECEMBER: I walked today into the bottoms and along the meadows, where no track had yet broken snow, following the familiar route up the northern rim of the Lower Meadow. All was still, save for the single cry of a pileated woodpecker, proud on the wind. A faint snow still fell, windblown, but the air was not cold, not bitter. I stood on the embankment looking back down the meadow, where already wind and snow obliterated my footprints, and I thought: This is the way my whole life is and will be, and, thinking so, I wrote *Man Track Here.*

Less than this my lone path is:
a deermouse track in winter's snow—
less than any mark of hare or crow.
Than the least falling leaf from the most crabbed, most aged tree
in the least wind, than the least pebble dropped into the stillest pool,
than the most secret ways of the foolish, obscure bee,
no path of mine is now as much, nothing of mine is
more. Through wood, way over meadow and plain,
footprint on hill and river sand, by moonlight and by rain,

where laboringly my clear path went, there
lordly strides now windy snow, and where
my challenge sounded to the wind, now looms the
blank, unheeding air.

31 DECEMBER: Stopping in the library briefly this afternoon, I heard from Dora that her daughter, Donna Jean, had said, after the Christmas Eve program at church, "I didn't see you, Mother, but I saw August, and he looked that big"—spreading her arms wide—"but I wasn't afraid of him."

Late tonight, I paused at the harness shop, where we sat in the dim light listening to Scriabin's *Divine Poem,* the Debussy *Nocturnes,* and the lovely *Rosenkavalier Waltzes* of Richard Strauss. The melodious music rang within the old walls and drew in Mr. Elky, who was passing, and he danced around quite by himself, holding his cane stiffly out, and took much pleasure in it, going out presently smiling, his eyes merry and his cheeks rosy. After the concert, I went down to Mueller's, where most of the old crowd had gathered, including Miss Ilsa Lahman, who, promptly upon my appearance, put on an exhibition of her incredibly bad taste by making a great to-do and suggesting that the conversation among Mrs. Mueller, Tess, and myself disturbed the card-players. Myself amused, thinking it well that Muellers become acquainted with Miss Lahman's ill-mannered pretensions. But I did not stay long; I went out into the kitchen and took luncheon before the others so that I might go home and spend the midnight hour closing my books for

the year, and walked home in the crisp night under the bright stars—Aldebaran and Orion and Sirius great in the heavens now—thinking of time past, time flowing inexorably onward, and of those gone this year: Jo, uncle Dick, grandmother Volk, cousin Lizzie, and only three days ago, Zona—my footsteps upon the hard snow like the clock's sound marking Sac Prairie's years as minutes down the frozen air before another year, another year, and still another year. . . .